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THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE

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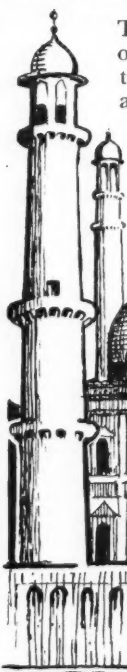
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LAMSON

THE
CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

NOVEMBER 1929.

POLYCHROMATA.

BY J. LESLIE MITCHELL.

V. THE LIFE AND DEATH OF ELIA
CONSTANTINIDOS.

I.

PULL in the deck-chair here, my friend. So. Now we can sit and watch our Nile slip past, and pity the poor Cairenes this sultry noon. . . . Eh, a book even this holiday jaunt to Barrage! The light one, I trust—of the mystery and pursuit and villain-exposure? Many of such I myself read, hoping that in one at last will the villain triumph. . . .

Campanella! God mine, it is thirty years since I read him, since I too walked the City of the Sun. In Russia; surely in the dawn of time! Campanella. . . . Perhaps they were his streets that Elia glimpsed; perhaps in those pages long-forgotten lies interpretation for another dreamer who saw the Ghosts of Sunland.

Ghosts? The unquiet dead who mow and moan across the astral planes? Not such were they who haunted Elia from that first vision on the Asian hill to the last dark hour of all. Not such are they with whom—who knows?—perhaps this hour, the exile gone home, he walks the City of the Sun!

II.

And his tale: Three years younger than our century, Elia, born in Samos, of the dark Ionian stock that has watched the nations pass and re-pass to the Asian shore, the processions phantasmagoric, since the days of Homer. He was the unwanted child, the child indeed unexpected and inexplicable. His mother, the strange, irritating woman who all her life had loved solitude, who would even linger in the night-fields to find that wonder of silence, made the no explanations at his birth, for she was dead. So also, for the little, it seemed that Elia would not live.

But live he did, and was normal but for the one ailment which
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vexed his early years and the Island doctors. This was some complication of the blood-pressure, resulting at the irregular intervals in the violent and erratic functioning of the heart. Here, when in Cairo many years later, my friend the Dr. Adrian tested that heart, and was by it the much and morbidly intrigued. . . .

From no such intrigue did Constantinidos *papakes* suffer. The brute farmer, desperately delving a livelihood from the land, with already the adequate family, and soured by the loss of his wife, Elia remained to him the unwanted and mysterious interloper. With such the atmosphere in that little farm of the Samian slopes, where from dawn to dusk was the unending toil, it was miracle that interloper survived childhood.

At the age of five or six he was working on the vinelands or tending the goats on the hills. At night he slept in a small room shared by his three brothers. The bed held but three—a jeering three, and the little Elia's couch was a heap of sacking. By dawn he would be out of doors again, trudging on errands to the village or driving the flock out to the hill-pastures.

And in that environment he grew into a boyhood the living refutation of the philosophies determinist. He had been born with some unquenchable well of friendliness and wonder—those the gifts that all his life he was to give the world—in his heart. From the later Elia I was to know I can build the mind-picture of that Samian boy of six—slight, and pale, with the shock of the matted dark hair, the broad brow and girl's mouth, the stare of friendly eyes. Not once, I think, in the desperate wrongs and bullyings of those early years, did he apprehend cruelty as conscious cruelty; always the puzzlement, never the resentment, followed the tears of pain in those eyes of his. . . . Once, in the moment of discernment, his father cursed him for those his 'fey' eyes.

And then came the first of those happenings that were to interweave throughout his life like the threads of gold in the cloak of frieze. He was seven years of age, had spent the day in the vine-plots, and was tramping home in the sunset. It had been the day of desperate toil and heat, and his boy's head and body were alike the throbbing ache. But something in that sunset he was so long to remember caught even then his stare of attention. 'It was so quiet I thought it waited for me,' he was to tell.

So, for a moment, then, the thing unknown since early childhood, came the sudden sick giddiness. He fell to his knees and lay against a bank, gasping, the blood throbbing in his ears. In his

pain he covered his ears with his hands, raised his head a little, and then, seeing, gave a cry of wonder that he yet heard but as a whisper.

For, below his feet, from that hill that looked out to the mainland and was called the Asian hill, was a Samos and sea other than he had ever known. Where the village had sprawled a moment before now swept up to sparkling points a great building of glittering walls, and far in the haze of the sunset in Asia the light struck fire from another such shining structure. Where had straggled the rows of vine-poles were marshalled now against the fervent sky line on line of giant trees, unknown. And upon the wind the smell of those trees came to him, and the smell was as of flowers.

He sat and stared. He was not afraid, only wondering, and then, for the swift moment of the utter conviction that shone and passed upon his soul, he knew that he had seen those trees before, had lain beneath them some other sunset and watched the great birds go wheeling into the gloaming of the Asian coast. . . .

There was not a sound, but he became aware that he was not alone. He turned his head and beside him saw standing, very still and intent and grave against the unearthly silence and the horizontal limnings of the sunset, a naked boy.

So close was he that Elia could see the flex of muscles in his neck as he moved his head. That head was crowned with flowers, and, taller than Elia, he stood with one hand resting manfully on an unclad hip and the other shading his eyes. There was about him a still friendliness, a companionship, miraculous when allied to that strange beauty of sun-painted skin and crowned valour of head. So, dimly apprehending, the little Elia gazed at him, the moment of the coloured and wonderful silence.

And then, I think for the first and last time in his life, he knew fear. All the dark tales of the Islands and the Asian shores, the debased imaginings and superstitions, clamoured suddenly in his boy-mind. It was a devil who stood beside him, a *phantasma*, a ghost. He crossed himself, tried to cry out, tried to stand up.

And at that the naked lad wheeled round on him with lowered head and sheen of body, and in the so-doing became a mist, a nothingness, leaving a scared and remorseful Greek boy who sat the long hour to stare at the brown-roofed village and later find his way home through a palpitating darkness.

III.

Nor, strangely, did memory of that fantastic vision die. It crept with Elia up through the years. Alone in the darkness, he would lie awake and think of it. Out in the fields, in the moments of supreme weariness, bright as ever in remembrance it would return to him. And once or twice, in the times of vivid happiness and laughter—for even were these in that resented childhood of his—it would seem to him that in a moment he would look again on Sunland, that see it indeed he did, dimly, through the shaken boughs of scented trees. . . .

These are his words, and I try to follow, watching that Greek lad grow up amidst his vines and goats and the sunsets vision-bringing of the Asian hill. In the little time, as it seemed, his brothers were men, broad of shoulder, quarrelsome still, capable of the much wine-drinking and the sniggering tale. Elia remained the drudge, silenter than when a child, yet quiet, I think, with a quietness that invited no fresh imposition of drudgery. From those eyes that his father held 'fey' something of the wonder had perhaps faded and had come the puzzlement. For all through the years and that silence of his, the friendliness in him stilled but unchanged, grew the questioning: Why?

Drunkenness, blows, cruelty; the seeking of shelter and stifling sleep when the night was a velvet miracle; shame of nakedness; filth of body when the sea cried its loveliness through each dawn; fear of solitude; patriotism and hate; unwanted fatherhood; worship of an incomprehensible and unlovely God; toil and toil from dawn to dusk that toil and toil might be repeated. . . . The list unending. These things—why were they?

And here the difference. Not as you and I and the hundreds other in the young revolt did he question these things or their like. The no hatred and rebellion moved him. Only the aching wonder, the fantastic disbelief. . . . Life was not so, could not be so. It was some trick, some play of shadows, some foolish dream from which he and the world would presently awake.

And northwards and eastwards throughout those cumulating years clamoured the great, unmeaning guns of the European War. Under their clamour two of his brothers vanished to Athens and the army. The third betook himself to the other side of the island as a fisherman. Was left Elia alone on the little farm with the dour,

greying man who drank the more now and seldom spoke a word to the son he hated.

Came an autumn with the guns the dying clamour and Elia seventeen years of age. Constantinidos *papakes* had developed the rheumatism and might not move, and in the week of the great Island fair it was Elia who loaded the year's produce into the clumsy waggon and with that waggon journeyed miles away, to the seashore town of Vathy. He had been there but once before, and that at the age of eight, and in the evening of the first day of the fair he wandered the streets like a traveller astounded from the planet Mars. . . .

She beckoned to him from a doorway in a side-street, and he stopped and stared at her, at her youth, her eyes unabashed, her painted lips. He knew nothing of women, had hardly ever seen a girl of his own age. The most innocent, perhaps, of any in that city, he looked at her, and then, at sight of that smile, I think his dark boy's face lighted and lighted with the friendliness that was his. He went towards her and she took his hands and suddenly he found himself trembling on the verge of speech and wonder unquestioning.

IV.

In the dawn he awoke, in the very first of the light, and the silence which wrapped all Vathy seemed a threatening thing in that fetid room. There was splash of early sun through the grimed window that overlooked the sea. Slowly, unbelievably, he turned his eyes from the room to one who slept beside him. . . .

In the sick remembrance he crept out of bed, somehow crossed the room, seized the window-catch and flung it open. The sea-air smote his face like a blow. With that current of wind came the sudden giddiness, the gripping at his heart. He gasped, stood swaying and blinking; gripped the window-ledge. . . .

The unclean room with its peeling walls and gaudy eikon had vanished. Out from a great embrasure that was not a window but a wide sweep of loggia, battled in stone, he looked upon the sunrise and the sea. Behind arched a great room with painted ceiling and the flutter of white draperies around a bed that swung in the morning air. And beside him, unheeding his nearness, standing together in the morning swordfall of sunlight, was the boy of the Asian hill and one other.

The boy of the Asian hill—but the boy no longer. Straight and

golden and splendid in the morning of manhood he stood, the sea-breeze in his hair, his arm about his companion. And then, as Elia watched, the unknown companion turned half-round in that embrace, glancing up with drowsy eyes into the face of him who held her. And at sight of her and that look on her face, at that white radiance of unshielded loveliness and drowsy tenderness, a moan quivered from the lips of Elia. He sank to his knees: the picture wavered and blurred before his eyes. Yet, for the stayed moment, was one detail vivid—he who had been the boy of the Asian hill swinging round till he stood plain-seen. . . .

And then Elia laid his face in his hands and wept, there, in the fetid room of the harlot, with the sea-air blowing upon him.

For it was his own face he had looked upon.

V.

He went home from Vathy, a boy still living the memory of a dream. But the shadows came swift across it. Within a fortnight of his return the conscript officers came down from Smyrna upon the village, read the long and puzzling proclamation, and marched away Elia and a score of others for training to fight the Turks.

All over Greece that year swept the wave of jingo patriotism. Greece was to grow an empire—again! to hold again in its length and breadth the ancient coast which the dreamy Ionians had colonised. In the great camp on Chios it was an exultant and singing conscript army of which Elia found himself part—Elia with the friendly, questioning eyes and puzzled brow.

For there were things of that life that wrung his soul with the pain of their beauty: reveille shrilling down each clean, sweet morning, the song and laughter and the beat of many feet upon the march, the stark, dark hours of sentry-go. Things that lived though past and dead, shining things. But there were others.

I think they waked in him his first anger—the guns, the bayonets, all the clownish apparatus of the mass-murder. Insanities impossible, yet insanities insistent, the hideous nightmare shadows that darkened sunlight from march and camp. They could not be, they were but the horrific imaginings. And yet—

But neither disentanglement of impressions nor rebellion was he ever to achieve on Chios. For within six weeks he and the thousands of other conscripts, the long lines of the half-trained columns with shining new English guns, had landed at Smyrna and were

marching up through Asia Minor to that battle-line that beckoned and thundered in the east beyond Manissa.

And as they marched ever nearer, and the rattling of great windows quivered in that remote sky, Elia was to tell me how the singing presently died. Then the happening inexplicable. For he found that it was he himself who restarted the singing, and the others who followed his voice. The strange white happiness came on him in the midst of the aching horror of surmise that held all the column.

'You see,' he was to tell me, 'I knew it could not be real. Life could not be as mad as that. There was something other than death and mutilation to which we were marching. There was something splendid behind those hills.'

And then came down the rains.

Through miles of warm downpour they marched. But they were never to reach the expected battle-line. For that afternoon Kemal Pasha smote the flimsy Greek lines as with a great fist, and the columns of reinforcements found themselves like bewildered ships breasting the westward pouring tides of rout. They halted and flung up hasty entrenchments throughout the night, and in the dawn the Anatolians attacked.

He was never to remember that day nor its happenings. Not even of shadow-land was it. But later he was to be told of it, and the reason of the decoration pinned on his tunic. For they told him that he sang throughout each wave of attack, fought with the mad fury, took over a sector of line when all the officers were dead or deserted, and held that sector with a few hundred amazed and stimulated men till they were in danger of being surrounded. And a madness came on his men as well. For they too sang throughout those beating hours of attack and counter-attack, and singing, led by Elia, marched off through the dusk of that day, an undefeated rearguard.

The Greek army poured towards the sea and Smyrna, and fighting and retreating behind came Elia and his company. Communications were lost, and but for the hasty confirmation of Elia as their commander they had no instructions. Late the second afternoon, the Turks close behind, they marched into Smyrna—Smyrna expectant of massacre and looting, with streets blocked by terrified crowds pressing down to the ships and safety. Here and there a fugitive stopped to scream taunts and execrations at the staggering, blood-weary company that Elia led.

And then, in that black hour, weak for loss of sleep, swaying forward under pressure of a will that was not his own, there happened again to the Samian boy—he was little more—that thing which he had twice known since childhood—the gripping sensation about his heart, the beating of blood in his ears. He reeled but did not fall; instead, found himself marching on, his feet passing and re-passing without his volition. The blood-pressure eased from his ears and now there shrilled and shrilled in them music stirring as a trumpet heard at night.

No Smyrna street he trod. Instead, was the glassy way, half-shadowed in sunset, half the strange blaze of light. The way thronged and cheering it was, and down the opening lane of that throng—men and women, flower-crowned and cheering, golden and kind and glorious—he was marching. Behind, amidst that voiced exultation, came on his company—explorers from the outer wastes of the universe, an expedition returned from deeds that men would sing forever. And beside Elia marched one whom he knew, one whom he had seen as boy and youth, one who turned calm, searching eyes to left and right.

Then, the glimpsed moment, Elia saw for whom he searched. She stood a little apart, sweet and fair, serene on her lips the little smile. And there happened in that visioned wonder the wonderful thing. For across the ways, not on the glorious being who marched beside Elia, *but on him, himself*, fell her eyes, and in their depths he saw leap swift pity and compassion. . . .

The picture of a moment, all this. His little company saw Elia's hand go to his eyes, saw him half halt and turn back. He was in Smyrna, in the raining darkness. Behind, on some hill, raved the nearing guns of the Anatolians.

VI.

They took him to Athens, and the story of his fight in the rear of the retreating army—the story of heroism in those dark weeks of shame and black defeat—thrilled through all Greece. He was decorated, confirmed *archegos* in the army, discreetly and hastily taught to read and write,—and given the training of new gangs of recruits from the Peloponnesus.

These things happened to him without his consent and barely with his understanding. He found himself in a new life that included the possession of a man-servant and the obligation to drink much

wine and seek amorous adventure. With the smiling, puzzled friendliness, he took those gifts in his hands and looked at them. . . . To train men to kill each other for the no need or reason, to drink when he did not thirst, to seek love of women as alternate narcotic and stimulant. . . . It was the idle fantasy, and from it the young and popular Captain Constantinidos turned with the impatient sigh to the upbuilding of that strange, dreaming faith evolved in a night in Smyrna.

Somewhere, somewhere if he searched, awaited him his *moira*, his fortune ; somewhere was explanation to shadow and sun-dream. Somewhere, in the world of reality, friend and lover, awaited *kore loukophotos*, the maid of the dusk. . . .

With that staggering simplicity that was of his soul-stuff he did the simple and obvious thing. He deserted—though he never paused to think of it as desertion. He dismissed his servant, laid aside his uniform, and clad himself in some other clothes he had bought. Then he went down to the Piræus, walked aboard a ship, and asked for work. By some chance the ship, about to sail, lacked its full complement of crew, and he was engaged at once.

He knew nothing of the ship's destination. Friendly, obedient, with that still, dark face and the stare of questioning eyes, he set about learning the tasks of the common sailor. It was the unseaworthy cargo-boat he had boarded, and as it lurched southwards across the Mediterranean an unwonted contentment came on him. His search had begun.

He left the boat at Alexandria in the same unconsidered indifference in which he had boarded it. He came into Egypt, alien, unafraid, unthinking, still that wondering peasant boy of the Asian hill. In the railway station he bought a ticket, found a train leaving for Cairo, climbed into it, and by the end of the journey looked out and saw the Pyramids marching up against the reddened desert of evening.

VII.

All that night he wandered Cairo, turning south at Bab el Hadid, down Clot Bey, and so, going eastward, till he came to the Khalig. Through the hours, till after one o'clock in the morning, he stood under an archway and watched the throngs go by. Some night of festa it had been, and faces innumerable lifted and sank continuously from darkness into the glare of the lamps—faces he searched in a wondering wistfulness. Then, crossing a deserted Khalig, he set

out again on his nameless search. Down through dark lanes towards the Suk el Nahassin he must have wandered in those still hours, under lighted balconies and shuttered windows, later in the ghostly radiance of flowering stars, seen far up, as from the bottom of a canyon. Drifts of singing and drowsy voices came to him, belated travellers, the fewer and fewer with the wearing of the night, slipped past him in that silvered darkness. Once he stood a long while and listened to the baying of dogs in one of the khans—an eerie crying of desolation that made him shiver, though he knew not why. And once he heard a lost child weeping, and sought it through a maze of alleys, till he lost himself and emerged a long time afterwards to see the stars paling over Citadel.

In the silence of our Cairene false dawn he turned back towards the Khalig. Long lines of donkeys were passing through it to the early marts. An occasional native, wrapped and hooded, for the morning was chill, hastened by. Elia sat down under the archway, waiting for the day. High up above his head waved already the tentative banners of the sunlight, but the Khalig itself was still in shadow.

Perhaps he slept then, for he started to knowledge of the warmth of day and the sound of approaching footsteps. He raised his head and looked out, the sun blinding his eyes a moment. Then he leapt to his feet.

For the footsteps were those of that girl who had looked her pity at him across the faery streets of Sunland Smyrna.

She, and no other. Down the Khalig she came, the sun a radiance about her head, unveiled, ungarbed, herself the morning, dreams in her eyes. Lightly she came, unconscious of that look of his that was a prayer. And then in a moment he had cleared the archway shadow and stood in front of her. The Khalig flickered to his gaze; he closed his eyes, reached out and seized her hands. . . .

There was a startled ejaculation, a tugging, a whimper of fear. He opened his eyes—and looked down on the frightened face of the harlot of Vathy.

VIII.

He had found his fortune. Only then, I think, did he see for an instant, and for the first time, his dreams and puzzlements as but the idle stupidities—awoke to the world that men called sanity and looked about him—the impossible, fantastic world that made of his love a woman of the streets.

They were married within a week at the Greek Consulate—the frightened, haggard-faced woman and the Samian boy with the dark, puzzled eyes which she too thought ‘fey.’

‘But you do not understand,’ she had protested tearfully. ‘I am—I am——’

Dazed, aching of heart, he had yet kissed her, with wonder for her tears and the face marred by things unspeakable. ‘You are Kalo whom I love,’ he said, with a sick amazement at his own words.

Late that night, when they sat alone together, she said a wonderful thing that yet seemed to stab him to the heart.

‘I saw you once again after that morning in Vathy. In Smyrna, before I came to Egypt. It was the night the Turks took the city.’

He turned towards her, a lost child, weariness in his face. ‘Oh, I am tired.’

And then, at sight of the pity and compassion leap in her eyes, he stared a moment and knelt weeping beside her.

IX.

With their little store of money they rented a flat of three rooms in a narrow alley-way off the Khalig. Then Elia set to the desperate search for work. He laboured as a road-sweeper, as a water-carrier, finally for a little while as an extra waiter at the café of Simon.

So it was he came into my life the brief while, in the brief moments in the night-lighted Khalig to stand beside me and tell me, because of the bond of friendliness and trust that a chance word had forged, this story of his fairy hauntings.

Lost, fantastically tragic, perhaps I could have helped him, perhaps friended him. But to me, who stand aside and listen and look, he was then only a voice, a tale, another colour in our city many-coloured. Intrigued, insincere, I remember that when he had finished I evolved, for my own amusement, and in the glow self-commendatory, the explanation airy and poetic.

‘Perhaps they are of the real world, those your Sun-Ghosts’—*Phantasmata toi helioi* he had called them—‘and you and I and the little Kalo but the vain imaginings, the dark, sad dreams of the People of the Sun. . . .’

And then I stopped. For he had turned his eyes on me and behind their puzzled friendliness I saw that which shamed me, the glib romantic, to silence.

X.

So I knew him, and he was gone, finding at length the more permanent work in a Greek printer's. The long hours of work they were, from which each evening he would return to Kalo Constantinidos and the little flat. And what doubts of himself and his own persistent disbelief, what stilled puzzlements each day brought to his eyes—how shall we know?

Yet his impossible simplicity suffered no change. He rescued from the street and the tormenting of the gang of urchins a half-crazed negro who had once been a cook. Him he installed as servant in the tiny flat, and was repaid by Salih ibn Muslih with the adoration and the jealous worship—the jealousy that extended even to Kalo.

But Kalo was happy. Always to her I think Elia remained the wonderful, inexplicable lover, so that even when he brought home the crazy negro she protested with but the half-heart and indifference. Life, life that had been the long nightmare since she fled from starvation to the painted houses of Vathy, of Smyrna, of Cairo—it blossomed now the scented hours, like a flower transplanted.

And Elia? Even when he held her in his arms did the look of puzzlement go from his eyes? He who knew neither fear nor regret—did her fear of the old negro seem to him the thing unreal? Her little human frailties of temper and desire—were those to him the shadowing of the sun?

I do not know, only look back across the years and see them there, in those little rooms in that little street, amongst the neighbours Syrian and Greek, inquisitive and friendly; Kalo by the open window, her hand to her eyes, awaiting her Samian boy come up the street each evening. . . .

That the picture, and for background the twisted body and crazed mutterings of the negro, ibn Muslih.

XI.

Then the happening horrific, of which were never the full details known. Late afternoon a woman who lived in the flat below that of Elia and Kalo thought she heard come from overhead a scream, the sound of scuffling. She listened, but heard no more, and thought herself deluded. Then an odd apprehension touched her. She

climbed up to the other flat and knocked at the door. Thereat was again the stirring, the sound of struggle, and then scream on scream that was suddenly stayed by the sound of a blow. . . .

There were men in the building ; they ran and brought gendarmes, and a great crowd collected. They battered in the door of the Constantinidos flat, and there, amidst the litter of the struggle, stood in horror till one went forward and covered that pitiful thing whose singing they had heard the few hours before.

At that moment a shout arose from the street. 'From the back window ! He escapes from the back window !'

The negro, stained knife in hand, had been seen descending the fire-escape. He made a crazed gesture of defiance and fled up an alley-way of warehouses, the mob at his heels.

Then, even while those who had broken into the Constantinidos flat stood there in the helplessness, they heard a voice raised in surprise, and turned about. In the doorway, with friendly, questioning eyes, stood Elia.

They parted and made way for him, and, wondering, he went forward. . . .

XII.

The crowd ran ibn Muslih to earth in a bottle-necked cul-de-sac. At that neck, worked up into the dervish rage, he stood and defied them, knife in hand.

Someone flung a stone and the negro reeled under a shower of missiles which followed that first one. Three gendarmes ran back for their carbines. And then the crowd was flung to left and right, and another madman, Elia Constantinidos, with the white face and blazing eyes, fronted ibn Muslih.

Bleeding, defiant, the negro looked up. Over him swept the swift change. At sight of Elia he gave a low wail and covered his face with his hands. The knife slithered to the ground. Elia crouched like a beast to spring, and the mob waited with panting breath.

Then the happening inexplicable. Elia was seen to reel, to grip his head as one in pain, and then walk forward towards ibn Muslih with outstretched hands. Behind him they yelled his danger, and at that shout he wheeled round.

'It is only ibn Muslih. My friend, ibn Muslih. . . .'

For a moment amazement held the mob. Then a growl of horror and anger rose. Someone shouted a foul taunt, a fouler

accusation. A stone hurtled through the air and glanced from Elia's forehead. But he heeded it not. Fronting them, there had come on his face the light unearthly. He flung out a sudden arm, and words incomprehensible as those of that last cry on the Hill of Crucifixion rang in the ears of their stayed anger.

'Why, it is we—we who are the People of the Sun! Those others—look, look, they are but shadows!'

A panting gendarme, newly on the scene, an Egyptian recruit who knew nothing of the circumstances except that here was a desperado at bay, knelt down, steadied his carbine on his knee, and fired. . . . He gave a grunt of satisfaction.

The mad light went from the eyes of the Greek desperado. He coughed, looked round with puzzled gaze, pressed his hand to his chest, and then crumpled and fell at the feet of the glaring ibn Muslih.

XIII.

And that is the tale of Elia Constantinidos, whose name to this day is the abomination and the hateful thing in the quarters of the Khalig.

But I—I heard of it and wept. What last fantastic vision did he see when he faced ibn Muslih? How transformed, in what strange picture-images did that last scene rise? And who are they—what dreams of life attainable, splendid, unshadowed—those who all his life haunted him?

We question and wonder and forget, like men in sleep. For not Elia alone, but all men they haunt. Under the many names and through the many faiths they pass, immortal, undying, the shining ghosts we glimpse and remember in wonder and weeping, as the faces of dead children are remembered.

A DUTCH SKIPPER WHO FOUGHT AT TRAFALGAR.

BY MAJOR-GENERAL SIR GEORGE ASTON, K.C.B.

PART II.

October 22nd. In the morning at 3 o'clock we came to our fleet, for in the evening we had lost a main-topmast overboard in a squall. I said often to myself: this is really the end. Had I been taken up by the Turc, there would still have been a chance for me.

We saw 33 ships lying in line in the morning when it was daylight and we only with 28 ships of the line, thus they had five ships more than we. I thought often, may God come to our aid, for this is really the last day that I am in the world. But we were to windward of them, which is the Englishman's plan always, if they have to give battle, to come to windward to break the line to the best advantage. Thus there lay heaps of cannon-balls between-decks and on the half-deck, for which one had to look out. And everything was cleared 'tweendecks, everything was flush from aft till forward, one saw nothing in the way. But my crew came often during the night to me and deplored each other's ill-luck, that we had to go to the slaughter-place like this, but I said to them: 'God lives still, He saved Tromp, and de Ruyter also, often and Nelson too.' I said this only to give them courage, and I wanted it myself to lie down with David. God has saved us up till now and will help us through this also, although it looked very bad. But at 8 o'clock we went to drink tea with the officers and our warm bread, that we were accustomed to eat in the morning, but my heart was pining about my wife and children and about my parents, and when I did not eat my bread as heartily as usual, our lieutenant saw it and said: 'Captain, how does it happen that you eat no better, are you afraid?' Then he said to me, 'It is better to die with a full stomach than with an empty one.' And the second broadside we did give the French he was shot dead. The Admiral Nelson had 14 ships and the Vice-Admiral Collingwood had 14 ships. Thus we went with two columns for the enemy. We were under Nelson, under the white flag. And before we went in battle, I and the mate and the crew came once more together and said that he

who was left was bound to give word home what had become of us and if we were killed in action, for the outlook was bad, for the orders of Nelson were to tie all flags fast and not to surrender, rather blow-up or sink than surrender to the French or Spaniards. This must be the greatest day of honour for England, which has ever been fought during its life at sea, for if we lose it, England is gone, and the French and Spaniards will be master of the sea and drag us all into Spain or France. These were the orders the captains got before they went into battle. Thus we could understand that it would not be easy. We bade each other farewell as the drum began beating 'tween decks for everybody to be at his post. For every knock given at the drum it was like a thunderbolt dropping on your heart. We came with top-gallant-studding-sails and everything set, so to the enemy just like a lion, but when the studding-sails were taken in, it grew still more strained, for the enemy lay just like a cluster of trees against which you look from afar. At 10 [?]¹ o'clock the enemy gave us the first volley, but could not yet reach us. Nelson had given orders that they had first to see the white in the Frenchmen's eyes before they started to fire, for it was not necessary to throw away powder and balls for nothing, therefore they had to be close-by.

The second volley which the French gave did not yet do much damage. But with the third they scored a hit. And with our first broadside which we gave we shot overboard the topmast of a French 74, and when it fell we shouted with our whole crew thrice: 'Hurrah!' This is usual, as soon as a mast or topmast of the enemy falls, to bring the enemy to despair. But at 12 o'clock we got one to starboard and one to port alongside, and that would still have been managed, but got also a Spaniard of 74 pieces, who caused us many dead for he shot all our stern-works to pieces. But there came a speedy release for us. The ship the 'Prince of Wales' and the 'Agamemnon' came to release us. At the gun where I was stationed not one was killed, but only one small wound. And at 5 o'clock the French and Spaniards went on the run, after we were mastless with 7 feet of water in our ship from the 14 hull-shots, which we had gotten of the French and Spaniards. We, after all, have taken 16 of the 33 and one blown up, which was a Frenchman, from which few people are saved. But the weather was too fine, there was not enough wind. And the wind was from the S.W. But to our advantage, when the battle had lasted about three hours five Frenchmen took to flight, which was a big point for us and we got courage again. And there were also already two French and two Spaniards which had struck. But at 3 o'clock there came a boat to us with the news saying that Nelson

¹ The times of events in ships' records are very unreliable.

had been killed, which made a downhearted impression on us, although we ourselves had many dead and wounded on our ship then. But at 5 o'clock it was finished, the French and Spaniards went on the run. But we could not run after them for we also had enough, for when it was finished we had 220 dead and wounded out of our 550 men. Thus we could no more.

October 23rd. In the morning we were taken in tow and we rigged up topmasts on the stumps and again set sails thereon, but it began to rain heavily and to blow. The wind from the south, a lee-shore, and we were at night in 18 fathoms heading from shore. But there was something to face in that weather! Every hour there came 5 feet of water into our ship. We had to pump or to drown; with the chain-pump, all-hands had to go at this. And the sea full of floating topmasts, sails, boats and wrecks and more other things. And in the evening it was dark from rain and blowing; we heard the crying of people who sat on a wreck and saw us. But we could not see them, and we could not on account of the bad weather get out a boat. But those poor men lamented and cried very much, we had to leave them to their fate. But we were very glad that we met each other after the battle again, although I was wounded with a splinter in my leg, but I limped as well as I could after it was dressed. It was storm-weather in the evening.

October 24th. In the morning the weather growing worse, rain with heavy squalls, and our ship laboured heavily because we were without upper-masts and had only stumps rigged-up. The wind stayed all the time in the south. If a vessel had not towed us we should have lost our lives on the Spanish coast, for we were with our whole fleet in the Bight. Could not weather Cape Trafalgar or Cape St. Vincent. And then most of our prizes went on the beach or were sunk. And that big Spaniard of four batteries of 140 pieces of cannon, with 2,500 men on board, was then also sunk, for he was shot mastless and shot through all round, for with that stormy weather they could not stop all the holes, because through the labouring of the ship she grew still more leaky, and they could not keep her dry with the pumps, so she sank in the night between 24th October and 25th do.

October 25th. In the morning wind and weather as before. Stormy weather with rain and an overcast sky. Saw several ships of our fleet close by, one without a topmast, another without a mainmast, being also in tow of another ship. And from the 21st till the last we could not get to bed as all the hammocks were on deck. One had to sleep on deck or on a gun 'tweendecks, the little time we had to spare; one saw them lie down everywhere to rest a little. We got double rations of wine and grog. But on account of the long struggle and being wet and cold and having no

dry clothes to put on as all the clothes were in the hammocks, at which we could not get, it looked very despondent for us. And at 3 o'clock, just as we had eaten, the new hawser on which we were being towed broke. Then it looked very sombre for us, for you can understand that it was impossible for us to launch a boat in such stormy weather. But our mate who towed us went about and lay to windward of us and she sent a boat with a rope to us and we floated a buoy with a rope attached which they picked up for they could not come alongside, they would have been done for with a high sea like that.

October 26th. In the morning reasonable weather. Went to repair everything which had been blown to pieces and nailed small planks over the holes and threw overboard many dead men, who died of their wounds. So at 11 o'clock saw the enemy with ten ships to leeward of us, and made sail towards them. But it grew calm with a high sea. Made everything ready for action, for the admiral gave orders to be prepared if a breeze came to set upon them. But the French and Spaniards ran away as fast as we could sail after them. So at 2 o'clock we got a fine breeze from the south, set everything, which could do good to chase them. But could not reach them with our fleet, because the evening hindered us, and as we were off Cadiz and the light of Cadiz was burning, the French and Spaniards ran into the bay. And again it began to blow up stiffly. And we were glad, that we got rid of that, for we thought still about the foregoing days, how it tested us, and I saw well that all hands were glad, officers and all, that we got over that, for they said, now we should go with a disabled vessel into battle, we shall have to lie simply as a battery, with our stumps of masts. But the sky was overcast and with rain and the wind was from the south, and it began again to blow strongly. Thus we were with our ship again on a lee shore; we could see the light of Cadiz burning easily.

October 27th. In the morning stormy weather with rain. Squalls, the wind still from the south. We had to do all we could to keep our ship from the lee shore, for the vessel which was towing us had all the reefs in her topsails and we made all the sail we could, but in the afternoon the wind veered to the S.W. and we were then a good distance to seaward, but it kept blowing strongly and raining. Dared not go about. But at 10 o'clock in the evening went about, east.

October 28th. In the morning sighted Cape Trafalgar on the Spanish coast and Cape Spartel on the Moorish coast. Saw several ships of our fleet and it became fine weather. The wind W.S.W. And shaped our course towards Gibraltar with the ships, which had become damaged and lost a lot of people and prizes

which we had taken, so that we were a little fleet of sixteen ships. And Collingwood with those other ships kept on cruising off Cadiz.

But when we were in the narrow of the Strait, there came more than thirty gunboats from Algiers, which were keeping watch under the Spanish coast in case possibly there should come an English ship or other, being without convoy. But they each have only one gun, which lays forward. Still they fired several shots on us, but a frigate which was with us and sailed very well gave them her broadside every time. In every gunboat there are about thirty or twenty-five men on board, and they flee between the rocks if they get it too hot, so that one cannot hit them there. At 7 o'clock in the evening we came to an anchor in the bay of Gibraltar.

October 29th. In the morning at 7 o'clock we looked from the half-deck over the bay with the glass to see if our ship was lying there, but we could not see on account of the many ships there. But when our captain was pulled on shore he asked me if I had yet seen my ship. And I doubted whether I did see her by her mast, but because there lay so many Venetians with those pole-masts, I let it go and said that I did not see her. Then he said to me, 'As I am going on shore soon, you come with me in the boat, and then we can see best if your ship is there. If not, then you can stay on board here.' At 9 o'clock he went ashore and asked me if I was ready to go along and I said: 'If you please, Mister Commander.' Thus at 9 o'clock we went. After having rowed a little I saw the hooker lying with a privateer close by her. Told the captain at once, and he said, 'Before I now go ashore, I will first take you to your own vessel.' Then you can understand that there was gladness in my heart, when I saw that ship, but when we came alongside, the prize-master would not allow anybody to come on board. He said that those were his orders. But our captain told him that he took that vessel in an unlawful way, under a Turkish flag, and asked why he did not go ashore, when he saw that these men were fleeing, and then 'you rowed after them to the shore, as this captain has declared to me. But you are about all thieves and plunderers, which you live by. Rogues! Let the captain come on board his ship, and sweep yourself out of her. I shall see you and your captain later on. It is a disgrace for the English nation, the way you are dealing with foreigners. But you all on the Privateers resemble Spaniards and Portuguese. I will send my boat some day on board and press you all out of her.' Then the prize-captain had to leave shamefaced, and I thanked the Captain a thousand times for his goodness, which he had shown to me and to my crew, and he thanked me for the service I had done on board

his ship in the battle, and if he could be of any service to me I simply had to come to him. When I went on board I saw that the mizzenmast and the bowsprit were broken and everything upside down, and when I went down below I found my chest open without any clothes, and my bedding was gone also, and everything which had been in the cabin was gone, and so it was with the clothes of the mate and of the crew also, and the ship's inventory also. Thus I was in a desperate case ; I did not know what to do. But a watchman still being on board, after having looked carefully over everything I went to town to see if I could find a Prussian consul. But there was no Prussian Consul, but a Danish consul, to whom I went right away. The gentleman's name was Thomas Stoks and he knew my correspondent at Faro, Mr. Chrispyn, very well as he dealt with him. But I had no proof from Mr. Chrispyn, thus Mr. Thomas Stoks did not know me and I did not know this gentleman. This man, being so good, went with me to a notary-public and declared there what had overcome me and that I had to flee from the ship, and that I had a parcel of iron on board, that it was for English account in Faro, but that my cargo-broker in Rotterdam had pressed it on me, that it would be on my account, and that he would give me all information on board, in case we fell in with a French privateer. The bill-of-sale of the iron and the certificates that I had with me I had put behind the looking-glass, between the glass and the wood.

But when I went on board, I saw that the looking-glass was broken, behind which the papers had been. That it was not my property was the reason why I could not declare at the notary-public, that it was my property. I thought to myself, they surely have found the letters that the iron is owned in Rotterdam. And I had a parcel of gin and cheese for my account with me ; that I said to be my property, for more than the half of it was stolen. This being done I went back again to the war-ship, where they were busy landing the wounded, and I went to the captain to ask if I could take my crew out of the ship. And he said directly, yes, and asked me how I found things on board. And I said that all our clothes were gone and stolen, and that everything was upside down, and he said to me, ' In case I have occasion I will come to your vessel to look things over,' and he said ' within eight days we have to be ready and then we have to go to the West Indies. If you are being examined, then say in my name that they were rogues who made you flee like that. But I would rather that your ship had not lain here, then you and your crew would have had to go with me again.' Thus I thanked him for his goodness, which he had shown to me, and he said that he would not accept any thanks for that, that we were sailors all and that it was now the one's turn

and next the other's turn. Thus we took leave with a glass of wine and he hoped that I should have my ship liberated soon, and I wished him a good voyage, when he should sail for the West.

And our crew were so glad when I told them to put the rest of their clothes in the boat, that we were free and that we could go to our ship. How quickly their clothes were in the boat! And I took leave of all the officers on board, and the men were glad that I had found her and took leave with a glass of grog. Thus about the evening, about 6 o'clock, we came on board our ship 'de Zeevrugt,' being glad to be on board, but lamented that we found nothing of our clothes and found everything dirty and stinking and broken. We managed to get a lot of sails, to sleep during the night on, and looked to getting something to eat. Thus we passed the night by talking over this and that and what we had passed through, with being in battle and nearly losing our lives on a lee-shore, if a ship had not towed us, every hour 5 feet of water coming in the ship, nearly the half of our crew killed or wounded in action. Thus we related there all our mishaps which befell us on this our unhappy voyage.

October 30th. In the morning went ashore at nine o'clock to be examined, but could not get a hearing, there being so many Spanish captains and officers who had to be examined, who were sent home on their word-of-honour, and I went back on board to clear up things and to get them in order.

October 31st. In the morning coming again to the Danish consul he gave me a clerk to accompany me to be examined, but they could not get ready, because they were so busy with the Spaniards.

It was the same story for the whole of November. The court was terribly busy with prisoners, wounded, and later the intricacies of ownership of the ship's cargo. The mate had also to give testimony. The repeated entry, 'Still as before. Could not be helped,' displays Batavian patience under inevitable delay.

November 3rd. In the morning I went ashore again to the consul and he again gave me a clerk, and then I was asked the 32 questions. And this lasted till 7 o'clock in the evening and then they said that my mate had to come and asked if I had him with me. And I said yes, that we had been on board of the man-of-war with our five and that at Faro there were another four.

November 4th. Sunday. The gentlemen sat not. Went for a walk in the town and found several Germans amongst the soldiers.

November 5th. In the morning I went with the mate ashore to be examined, but they told me to come back to-morrow as they were busy with the Spanish sailors to send them home on their

word-of-honour, because they had no need of any vessels to bring these men away, for as soon as they were over the bridge outside the gate they stood on the mainland.

November 7th. In the morning having gone ashore again with the mate they could not get ready. There came several Moorish barks with cows from the Moorish coast, on which they must live in Gibraltar, if not they have no refreshment, for Gibraltar is only a rock, on which nothing grows. They must have their fresh provisions from the Spaniards or Moors.

November 11th. Being Sunday the crew went ashore with our officers, which we had on board, as overlookers.

November 16th. In the morning I went ashore again to the Consul to see if there were orders for the mate to come ashore. I and a clerk went to ask whether he had to come and they said yes. Then I went directly to fetch the mate and come with him before the Gentlemen, but they said that I had to go into another room, as long as my mate was being examined, but it lasted till late in the evening. So at 7 o'clock we went at last on board, without having had anything to eat, because he first had to swear before he did his examination and when he had done the 32 questions he had to swear again that he had spoken the truth, that the ship belonged to Prussia, that he and I were Prussians and more other things; which they had asked me too.

November 17th. In the morning having gone ashore I met our Captain on board of whose war-ship we had been and he asked me if I was not yet ready to sail. I said it was not yet decided. Then he said to me that he had been to the headman of the court and that he had inquired after it and had got answer that on the 21st of November it would be decided about our ship. And said that I could put my mind at ease, that I would get my ship back.

He then went on board to sail and I bade him good voyage and he the same to me.

That gave great hope, that he said that, that we should get our ship back. Then we went to clean up and overhaul everything. For before we knew nothing, how it would finish with us, whether we should get our ship back or not.

November 18th. In the morning having gone to the consul I said to him that I had spoken to my captain and what he said to me. Then he said to me, if you had not had the iron on board you would have already been free for a long time.

The last week of November brought an anxious moment.

November 25th. In the morning went on shore and coming to the Consul there came a skipper who came from Barcelona loaded

with brandy under the Prussian flag, who was brought up also, and as soon as he was examined and finished, he was condemned right away on the same day.

November 26th. In the morning I went to the Consul again and he told me that the court was sitting about a Prussian ship which had just arrived and that they had sat on Sunday because the frigate which took the Prussian ship had to go with dispatches to the West Indies. That they had sat only a short time over her because she had false papers on board and that her crew, who were gone over to the frigate, betrayed him (the captain) and also told where the papers were hidden. And then I bought a small boat from the captain, for his ship had gone in any case, for 5 Spanish dollars, for one sees there but little English money. It is Spanish silver which is used there mostly, and gold, and Portuguese gold.

November 27th. In the morning I went ashore to the Consul and he told me that to-day we should come before the court. So at 11 o'clock we went to it and at 1 o'clock it was announced that we were free, but that we had to bear our own costs and damages. And that the iron, which we had loaded, was condemned. So this gladdened us, when I heard out of the president's mouth that we were free.

November 28th. In the morning we started to brighten up our ship a little and tarred and smeared a little, and did everything which had to be done. Our crew was then very glad that we were free, because they feared every time that we should not get free, because so many vessels were brought up there and all condemned.

November 29th. In the morning I went ashore to the Consul and he said to me that the following day I had to shift to the bay, for they would come to fetch the iron.

Storms delayed the business : during fine intervals they 'repaired their bowsprit, which was in pieces. Fished and lashed it together,' and 'made a mizzen mast out of our spare main-yard.'

December 4th. In the morning fine weather. There came a bark from the Custom-house alongside for the iron and commenced directly to discharge, of which we only had on board a big four hundred staves, which were sent by Mr. van Dam of Rotterdam to Maasfluis.

Then followed another spell of bad weather at sea and delay ashore.

December 15th. In the morning good weather. The wind W.S.W. Hove our second anchor to save the rope from chafing on the bottom and went ashore to see if my papers were yet clear.

And coming to the consul he said that they would be ready to-morrow.

December 16th. Sunday. In the morning I went ashore and received my papers allowing me to sail, and engaged a man to take us over the bar, when we arrived off Faro.

December 17th. Monday morning. Hove our anchor and stood with the English convoy to sea.

Here we will take our leave of the skipper who fought under Nelson at Trafalgar. Let us hope that he reached his native land in safety. On this point I am conducting further research. The journal tells us that for a time he remained with the convoy 'for fear of the Moors and Turcs which we saw daily.' Westerly winds delayed the voyage, and Christmas found the convoy at anchor off a lee shore. At dawn on December 31st the wind came from E.S.E. and, the narrows of the Straits having been cleared, our hero left the convoy, and on January 2nd, 1806, he arrived off Faro, where the remainder of his crew rejoined him on the 3rd, having been accommodated in a boarding-house for a dollar a day since they were left there in October. On the 7th the vessel entered the harbour and was beached for repairs and overhaul of hull and rigging. On the 21st she was chartered 'with cork and sumack to Bristol for 320 pound sterling.' She sailed on February 7th, but it was not until 4 p.m. on February 9th that she landed her pilot being clear of the harbour.

On February 10th Cape St. Vincent at 5 p.m.; bore 'W. by S. by guess $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles'; at noon the next day the cape bore 'E. by N., distance 5 miles by guess,' the wind being from the N.W. 'And (we) reefed our topsail and the breeze still growing stronger with a squally sky—' And there the epic tale breaks off shortly. We know no more.

CANADA AND THE 'ODYSSEY.'

It is taken for granted, ever since the Ancient said so, that the centre is the position for safety and virtue. Clocks, however, gain their outlook on Time by the energetic swinging of their pendulum from one side to the other. And I have always thought that they are in the right of it. To wander into outer ways and yet keep a sense of direction—a direction more interesting as it is seen from opposite points of view—is no bad manner of travelling along the roads of life. Whatever may be the philosophic rights of this question—and I must not digress into these vast realms—there is no doubt of contrast as a touchstone for realities.

Contrast has been thrust upon me by the kind and casual hands of providence.

After travelling on the fringes of the East, in villages unknown except to a few military exiles or stray eccentric wanderers, plunged in a life more ancient far than Rome, I found myself bound for western Canada on an Atlantic liner.

The unharvested deep was not very kind. I read the *Odyssey* in my bunk, while the grey sea water slapped our side with more vehemence than Leucothea's veil has ever soothed. The sublime story mingled with the voice of wind and pattering spray. And I had not come far into the first books before I made a discovery. This life I was reading of—I had *lived* it: not in imagination, but in sober fact.

'There was Nestor,' I read, 'seated with his sons, and round him his company making ready the feast, and roasting some of the flesh and spitting other. Now when they saw the strangers they went all together, and clasped their hands in welcome, and would have them sit down. First Peisistratus, son of Nestor, drew nigh, and took the hands of each, and made them to sit down at the feast on soft fleeces upon the sea sand, beside his brother Thrasimedes and his father.'

'But when they had put from them the desire of meat and drink, Nestor of Gerenia, lord of chariots, first spake among them: "Now is the better time to enquire and ask of the strangers who they are now that they have had their delight of food. Strangers,

who are ye? Whence sail ye over the wet ways? On some trading enterprise or at adventure do ye rove, even as sea-robbers, over the brine, for they wander at hazard of their own lives bringing bale to alien men?"

The last of these questions has not been asked me—a matter of fashion and not fundamental. But—Telemachus in Ithaca, Nestor in sandy Pylos, Menelaus, or Helen sorting embroideries from her treasure chest—do I not know them well? The thresholds of their houses are no longer of cedar, the handles of their doors are not of silver, but the turn of their thoughts and phrases would be understood by the goodly Odysseus if in his wanderings he were to come among them. Sitting with closed doors while the *narghilé* goes round and the stories are told; or in some border village whose sentinel stands on the half-crumbled tower watching for raiders while the village goats are browsing; or when the yellow pipes, joined with smooth wax, grow wild with ancient tunes of love or war: I have often thought myself in the fresh morning of days, the known world still ringed with mystery.

Take any of the Homeric descriptions of ordinary life, apart from the actual drama of the story, and you will find that they correspond in detail often and almost invariably in spirit with the life of the more primitive East, if it is ever your fortune to divest yourself of the European atmosphere that is carried like an armour, and to see it in its own simplicity.

The very prayers to the Olympian gods, though now toned down to the Unity and made teetotal, have the same spirit behind them. As we dip our bread in the common dish, we say, 'In the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate.' The sense has not varied, the ever present consciousness of life under the impulse of the Irresistible, the Incalculable, the Unknowable. 'Give thy friend also the cup of honied wine,' says Nestor; 'to make offering thereof, inasmuch as he too, methinks, prayeth to the deathless gods, for all men stand in need of the gods.' To us such words have become strange. But the Eastern guest, wherever the Frank is not yet known, will not be surprised when he hears them.

Modern inventions in themselves have not altered the point of view. In the Transjordan village the maiden draws water out of a covered well. Her blue gown hangs stiffly from her breasts. The dark linen bands give to the peasant face a delicate madonna-like oval. She draws the water up in a petrol tin to fill our radiator, and the centuries are between us. When we offer money she

withdraws. 'The gift of water goes with the blessing of God,' says she. So might the handmaid of Alcinous have spoken.

As I came to the end of my reading, and the arctic wind told us of Labrador, and the low slopes of New Brunswick appeared against the west, I thought of our loss. The Heroic Age exists. It had revealed itself as a living world miraculously familiar. But *we* have lost it. Lost, not the heroism, possibly not any one of its particular virtues—but the general attitude which is taken for granted between Homer and his audience.

If this loss is due to the trappings of civilisation, the mere face of outward things, surely—thought I—the old spirit may be reborn like the Phoenix on the new continent. Circumstances here are still heroic. We may find the same reality beneath a different exterior, even as it is to be found in communities of the less visited world. Man's humble force there is alone with the Powers around him. Here he is not alone. Strength is added to him: but so modified by the vastness of natural obstacles that the odds remain the same. It is a matter of proportion. The colonist and pioneer really stand in the same position of dignity and danger as the ancient navigators, or shepherd people of the desert.

We slid up the St. Lawrence in the gathering night, and the great bridge of Quebec, iron arches spanned against the sunset, looked like a symbol of man's courageous spirit.

I stayed little in Montreal. Its wealth is housed in grey stone. Its shops resemble temples, with marble aisles. There is some shadow of that Babylonian splendour which dignifies the commerce of New York.

In early morning I lifted my head from the jog of the pillow and looked out on birch stems flushing to the sun, and stripling pines—the forests of Ontario, and the wide sheets of water. Infinite loneliness: the monotony of land not yet divided into human variety. In the heart of the woods, at long intervals, are small clearings; and frame houses, one or two, like square boxes, a few slipshod oddments scattered untidily; and solitude again. Solitude stretching away beyond imagination. Here and there a mining settlement, a wooden assembly of slanting houses, lives ready to expand or dwindle as the vein of metal feeds it.

The train keeps an even slow pace. Three or four people come to meet it on the wooden platforms, with horses or cars waiting on the rough track behind. The hours turn to days without a

change. Then the prairie opens up like a surprise, with wide horizon rolling away like the desert, with a yellow desert light too upon the stubble. Against its sunsets, wedges of wild duck flee from the winter and the north. The landmarks here are square towers, elevators of grain.

When you speak of Canada in England, people are apt to think of West and East as next-door neighbours. It is not until you reach the other side that the Pacific province reveals itself as an adventure. On the western slope of the Rockies, after so vast expanses, small farms and orchards wear a familiar friendly face. The red apples look cheerful on the trees. This land is wrenched with infinite labour and sacrifice yard by yard out of the tenacious grasp of forest roots—pine and fir, poplar and birch and cedar (so they call it, though Solomon would not know it). The dark stems cover the hills with fine pencil shading, or lie criss-cross in ruin where wind or fire have swept.

As we come west there is more and more talk of 'opening' new country, new mines, new railways. Everything, from the felling of a tree, or the setting up of a shack with a notice board to define it as a shop, is an 'opening up' in the conquest.

This is surely heroic. For what is the chief character of heroic ages throughout the world? They should be *significant*: should face as fully as may be the underlying forces of being—life, death, the immortal gods. And besides this, the significance of life should be common to the whole community, so welding it into one pattern.

When man faces Nature with defeat or extermination before him, his life cannot be without significance, whatever form it may take. The omnipresent machine cannot destroy it: it in itself is made epic by heroic circumstance. The machine is but a poor mechanic when it does what can be done adequately by hand: but in the plains of Manitoba, for instance, the quick summer gives no time to gather harvest; the whole country depends on the engine for its very existence as cultivated land; the machine acquires the sort of meaning which any other object must possess when man's life hinges upon it—the sort of meaning which Homer gives to the black-prowed ships, or to Nausicaa's wagon, 'high, with good wheels, and fitted with an upper frame.' The value of the thing gives it the heroic emphasis.

What a charming touch is that where Penelope, in fear for her son, crouches by the threshold lamenting, nor sits upon a chair 'although there were many in the house.' With such an accent

the rancher might speak of his few possessions, carried through great distances and difficulties. I have seen a look of affection cast on an iron stove, companion of wanderings, and it seemed to me that it was an equivalent to the Homeric words.

Significance, daughter of necessity, sister of danger—sailors and peasants, saints and mountaineers know her, for her light and shadow is on their lives. She dwells everywhere eternally. But in heroic ages she stands in sight and governs the lives of all. Unity is the second essential attribute.

I would make it clear parenthetically that the Heroic Age is not bound to produce an epic. For this a peculiar form of society seems essential. Our term includes the epic, but is also wider, and the Heroic Age has been lived by many a people who in literature are dumb.

The Homeric world is epic, an aristocratic society descended through illustrious generations from the gods. But in so far as it is also heroic, it possesses the necessary unity. Thralls and princes talk the same language. Their outlook is the same. Wealth and position give to those who own them benefits different in degree but not in kind from those enjoyed by everyone else. The same thing was true of country life of the old kind in England before the London season and the fashion for travel were general, when squire and tenant shared the same ideas. In the *Odyssey*, the point comes out very clearly in all the intercourse between Odysseus and Eumaeus. The swineherd was a king's son and has become a thrall, but neither circumstance is ever felt as having any bearing on the relationship between them. The spiritual and intellectual values remain the same independently of social position.

Such a state of society is inevitably transitory. It is destroyed, not by wealth, but by the means of transport which wealth now gives. Through these, either actually or intellectually, one part of the community can live in a world different from that of the other. If we think of intellectual as well as material means of transport—printing, telephony, wireless, etc.—we realise that together they account for practically all the division of outlook in a modern society. The Heroic Age is impossible until a larger unity is found.

In new countries the old condition returns. Western Canada especially is practically isolated, by the immensity which encompasses it, from any aspect of life other than its own. In its solitudes, or towns surrounded by solitude, the conquest of Nature still absorbs

and unifies the whole of life. Work which must be done, pleasures which can be obtained, are more or less the same for all, and a thousand miles bring you scarcely nearer to any other kind of world. The old condition returns, and brings with it two of its most pleasing characteristics—a sense of the natural dignity of men apart from their occupation; and the courtesy which comes by rights with such a feeling.

Our British code of manners is sometimes insular, and British new-comers are very apt not to recognise the quality with its Canadian flavour. We are often disliked. The officer in the guards who came 'out west' to farm, made himself popular enough till his village produced a murder and had to borrow the executioner from a neighbouring state. He strolled into the club while they were entertaining the new guest, was introduced, hesitated, put his hands in his pockets, and finally said that 'By G— he was democratic enough, but dashed if he'd shake hands with the hangman.' There are less excusable cases.

We do shake hands with all sorts of people. And all sorts of people put themselves out to be kind to us who would not take the liberty elsewhere. The lady at the telephone, whom we meet at bridge parties, will ring up to say our friends are home again if she happens to know that we want them. In the ballroom, otherwise the parish hall, we hold out mugs for coffee, while our M.P. bears us our suppers across the floor, tied in neat paper parcels. The days when the most deserving prisoners were allowed to hand round refreshments at the constabulary dances are, alas! over. 'Deference is what I miss,' the lady from England tells me. But if you are in trouble, or sickness, or poverty, short-handed with your cows, or toiling under your weekly groceries up the ice-covered hill—someone will come to help you, neighbour or casual passer-by as the case may be. It is unimaginative to deny the title of courtesy to so much active kindness.

Here then are the heroic elements. We recognise them, and hopefully look for the fulfilment of their promise—and alas, the Heroic Age of Canada has already vanished like a dream, its vestiges almost lost beneath our engulfing commercial imaginations.

The Barbarian invasions are here reversed, and the slow natural process is swamped by civilisation with a terrible confusion, as if the twentieth century were imposed without transition on the early history of the world. And the pioneers, who are primitive men,

feel vaguely their incongruity and retreat towards the north. There are great numbers of them, many whiteheaded now. In their eyes you can trace the youthful gleam. Fifty, forty, thirty years ago they put up a two-roomed shack, roofed it with cedar slats, bought a stove, and have lived ever since, 'stumping' their plots of ground (blasting the roots out of it with dynamite), planting and sowing while the country opens up around them. They need very little: a few groceries, a few clothes and implements. The getting of these forms the sum of their contact with their fellows. When they find that they begin 'to talk to themselves,' they come to mingle for a spell with mankind in some more inhabited district. They rarely grow rich. If there is any money, as often as not it is sunk in some experimental mineshaft in the hills near by while other labour is at a standstill during the winter months. Strange freaks, merest accidents, have brought them to their remote hard dwellings. An old man died this year beyond our valley flats which the spring water floods. Even now it is a lonely creek far from the road. Forty-seven years ago he came there, a youngster making his way over the mountain trail to the Pacific coast. He liked the place, unsaddled his pack horse, and stayed. Our little steep town with its wooden sidewalks, its Ladies' Guild and four churches, its parties, politics, and mid-Victorian ethics, the roads and the railway, have grown up since he came. And in a few years when the floods are drained and new tracks laid down, the little outpost in its turn will be swept into the general scheme.

There are many of these lonely spirits. In the spacious empty country they find their own life and are recognised for what they are. How many disguised, unrecognised and homeless in our own crowded lands? Thousands still find their way out, and break new country, ever farther to the north.

But they are not Canada. They make the country as the hard stone makes the road: the traffic that flows along it is a different matter! Their labour endures to nourish an outlook, a whole scheme of life and thought as different from their own as can well be imagined.

In the prairie, where success is most rapid, the change can be observed more sharply. The new settlers are hard and keen and eager. Even as you watch, you see the angles rub off. The hardness grows sleek, directed now against fellow-men rather than the asperities of Nature. The dignity is lost. With the shedding of their rough 'Mackinaws' and the assumption of blue serge, the

man of affairs appears: American political methods: rapacity unredeemed by danger. The Heroic Age is dead.

I will not sing its dirge. We think of Lot's wife and Mrs. Partington and neither bring brooms against the inevitable nor become petrified by looking backwards. But in face of the uniformity from which there is no escape, for its waves roll east and west with ever-increasing volume—in face of it we may ask what it is makes many, and not the worst among us, prefer the toils of Ulysses or the ranger's life to the comforts of our time?

I will not be positive, but this is what I think.

The element we miss and require, for which some are prepared to barter all ease and many of the pleasures of existence, is danger. It is another name for the unknown. It *is* the unknown, in fact.

Over its shadowy gulf the whole history of man is spun like a spider's web, from the first thin thread as it swayed in the breath of chance, to the present elaborate structure.

Our city of inventions is intended to hide the abyss over which it is flung. Here we may live without actually feeling the risk of living. For security we barter our sense of value. The actual appliances of life have grown out of symmetry with the background of our spirit: the last few centuries have increased the one without enlarging the other, and the proportion is obscured.

Perhaps before long new citizens may walk their streets with such eternal immensities revealed to them that their elevators and skyscrapers, advertisements and educations sink into proper insignificance, and they know, as Homer's audience knew, that the world is a perilous place. We may then look for the new Heroic Age.

Meanwhile love, sorrow, imagination, or death remind us at frequent intervals of the unfathomed spaces in which our city hangs. And many who feel that its walls are brick built must ever wander to the edge, colonies or Alps or deserts, and peer over into the face of danger, or eternity.

THARAYA.

A MATTER-OF-FACT STORY.

BY C. MARTIN.

OF course, it could not have happened except in the old Italy, the dear Duce having everything so well in hand now. Organised and all that, you know, my dear. You don't mind an old woman calling you that? No? So sweet of you. Oh, my ball! Thank you, my dear. So quick and clever of you! Silly of me to put it on my lap. It never stays there. I haven't got much of a lap, you see. Yes, for my grandchildren. I don't believe in woollen things for the poor heathen. Too hot already, I should say, with all that sand, and palms and things. And wool can be so irritating. The war, you know. My nephew told me. Not that it was hot where he was, poor boy. But other things— Oh, it's gone again. Thank you, thank you. I always drop stitches if I get up. So tiresome. And the sun is so hot this morning, but here in the shade of the orange-trees, quite comfortable, don't you think? This terrace is my favourite spot of the whole pension garden.

Yes, as I was saying, everything is so wonderfully arranged now. Still, I must say I felt the old Italy more simpatica. The way they kissed your hand. So gratifying. Though I never was sure of my change— But then I get puzzled over that even in England. Counting in twelves after tens, you know. So confusing, isn't it?

What did happen? Really in the old Italy anything could have happened. Anything out-of-the-way and romantic, I mean. Such perfect weather too. She and the young man and those two lovely brown babies all fitted into the hot still afternoons and moonlit nights. But people don't believe me. And it is ridiculous to say it didn't happen as *I* say, when I met the poor young man and talked to him, and he to me—most openly, before the very picture there was all the fuss about. But when the very people who disbelieve you go straight off and swallow all Angy's wild story—! To be disbelieved and set aside isn't pleasant. I never speak of it now.

But what I maintain is, that with clear and simple people, like you and me, things *are* simple and clear. It is when dear Angy—you've met her here, the Honourable Angela Duff-Fordyce—when

she with her wild imagination and her dark introspective mind, and the Colonel with his stupendous intellect—— Both far cleverer than me, and I'm very fond of Angela, while I *revere* him. But to talk of ghosts, my dear, as they both do, too absurd! A ghost in daylight! Indigestion, I should say, though she eats almost nothing. That's partly it, I daresay. I like to see people enjoy their food. I find, you know, that all these wild ideas, ghosts and that sort of thing, have always quite a matter-of-fact explanation. Eating too little, I daresay, then Angy gets these fancies. Babies coming out of pictures! Quite too ridiculous, don't you think? It simply shows where all this credulity and spiritualism lead to.

Still, she never saw anything compared to me. All hearsay, and her own dark imagination, my dear. That's all she has to go upon—except the picture of course, the altar-piece in San Giovannino, you know. And there she declares there was nothing *to* see, if you believe her. But it is so dark in that gloomy mouldy little church—you can see it from here, if you stretch a little over the parapet—and the candles flicker so on the altar, that I'm sure anybody could believe they saw anything or nothing, especially with dear Angy's short-sight and vivid imagination.

Now, I did see all there was to see. Nothing to make a fuss about. Simply the poor dear young man standing in the sunshine outside the church porch, smiling down at me, with two of the loveliest cherubs of brown Italian babies you ever saw in his arms. Clothed in *wisps*, my dear. But that didn't seem to matter. He held them so closely. Their heads on his shoulder, very grave but happy. And his face and smile! Too touching! There can be a passion of fatherhood, my dear, though I daresay you're too young to think of things of that sort.

So nice of you! Yes, it's certainly best to come to an eye-witness, as you say. You shall hear the whole thing, just as it happened, a simple matter-of-fact story.

They came to our pension in May. No, not this pension. That ghost story ruined poor Mrs. Darrell's pension for the time. Everyone left. I came here. So did Angy and the Colonel. Quite comfortable, don't you think? But nothing of a view compared to Pension Darrell. I'm fond of a good view. So pleasant and soothing when one looks up from one's knitting. Yes, they came in May. A sad month for me, my dear. All my great sorrows came in May, which alone would prevent me from ever becoming a Roman Catholic. Such a great month with them, you know.

Their name? Oh, Mr. and Mrs. Bassett-Joyce. I never found out what county. It's a Worcestershire name, I believe. But London tells one nothing, does it? And not even district letters after it. Still there was something about them both. Out-of-the-common, but quite good style. And she very pretty in a really high-bred way. Not that eternal grin and jazz and racket that seems to have crept into the best circles nowadays, don't you think? Yes, she was different. Statuesque, if you know what I mean. Would sit for hours by the terrace wall at the bottom of the garden, and he beside her, looking at our view. Starred in Baedeker, you know. Not this one, Pension Darrell's. Soothing to see them there. Rather blocking our famous view, but they were as nice as the view to look at. She always in white. Something very strong about her, almost rigid. Such a pure profile, but not gentle, rather set and determined. Generally they didn't speak much. She worked, and he held a book or a paper. But he hardly took his eyes off her, and now and then he would touch her scarf, or a fold of her dress, almost furtively, and she'd glance at him, and then turn quickly away. But for Angy to talk of a silent struggle, and say she 'sensed' a battle of wills whenever she passed near them, and to call the terrace 'the arena' as she did——! Well, that is the sort of thing poor Angy will say. They sat there most peacefully, my dear. She had a weak heart.

A honeymoon couple? Oh, no! Married for some years. They both told me. But if they hadn't, I should have known. There's an air, don't you think? Something fixed and settled. They had got it, although he was so devoted. Watching her, jumping up to fetch things before she asked. So pretty to see. More like a foreigner. *Petits soins*, don't you know? So attractive. But they were quite English for all that, unmistakably so. Even if the dear Colonel hadn't met them—now where?—some years before. 'Was it a Scotch hydro? At any rate not at all a place where foreigners would go!

So odd, I remember nothing of his face but his eyes. Big brown eyes like a dear old spaniel's I once had. Yes, just like dear old Bruno's when I wouldn't let him out by himself. Because he poached, my dear, shockingly. Angy, of course, talks of a hungry devotion and a starved love, and I don't know what besides. But that one has to disregard. It is simply Angy's way. Tragedy in everything, even in a happy inseparable young couple like that.

Happy? Of course, they were happy, my dear! Would

they have spent all those hours together if they hadn't been? He used to go long tramps sometimes—young men need exercise—and they drove out sightseeing and so on, but always together. He was the most devoted young husband I have ever seen.

Was she as fond of him? Well, it seems an odd thing to say, and I hope you won't think I imagine things like Angy, but sometimes when she looked at him, I thought she looked almost frightened, though fond of him too. Then next minute perhaps she'd look quite angry and resentful. Often after he'd brought her something she wanted. But I quite understood. Heart, you know. They can't help it. Some days she looked really ill, would scarcely stir from her long chair, and he would read to her, or they would murmur together—quite like doves, both so tranquil and happy. But other days—Heart people have *tempers*, you know, part of the disease, poor things. So pleasant to watch a young couple so wrapped up in each other, for even Angy never contradicted that.

She seldom spoke to us. Went up and down, with her lovely marble face, so pure and clean-cut and her pale hair, among us but not of us, you might say, calm and gently smiling. But no one could take her gentleness for weakness. Not at all. Her heart might be weak, but her will was strong enough. If she made up her mind, there would be no moving her. In fact, Angy called her 'the stone woman.' Only to me, of course. All of a piece with her calling the terrace 'the arena.' Declared she could 'sense,' as she says, a battle to the death between two strong wills. I told her to take one of my aspirins, and not to be ridiculous.

It was after that I tried to place them a little. I wanted to face Angy with facts. But it seemed as though the more I enquired the less I knew. I was just giving up in despair, when I met him, really got him to myself, and had quite a long chat with him. It happened like this. I go to San Giovannino's in the mornings when it isn't too hot, to read my Morning Service there. Our English Church is too far for me now. And after all, it is a *church*. I seldom saw a soul but the sacristan, half-blind and more than half-silly, my dear. But going in that morning there I found him—Mr. Bassett-Joyce, not the sacristan—gazing quite lost at the altar-piece. You've seen it? No? Oh, you must. It's double-starred in Baedeker. The usual Virgin and Child, you know, very dark with age, with Saints on each side, and the two sweetest little boy-angels you ever saw, kneeling, holding her long robe. You

can get photographs of them alone, quite sweet. I have one myself. Well, there he was, staring. I've seen so many look at that painting, but never quite in that absorbed way. Not as though he were an artist, either. His hair quite short, and always so well turned out. But there he was, by the altar, as close as he could get, gazing with all his eyes at the two boy-angels, the bambini, as I call them. Perfectly rapt, my dear. If Angy had called his eyes hungry then, I might have thought there was something in it. It made me somehow rather uncomfortable to watch him, so I went up and spoke. And we talked. He told me quite openly he longed for a son. 'Like one of those jolly brown little chaps there,' he said, nodding at the picture. But his wife was far from strong. He had brought her here for quiet and rest. She was better already, much better. Didn't I think so? And I agreed.

Then he began to talk rather fast and excitedly. I can't quite tell you his exact words, but all about the power of prayer. How it could draw down blessings, and he didn't believe the age of miracles was over, nor did the Roman Catholics, and why shouldn't they be right? And about how he yearned for a son. Was it sinful? If not, the prayer of perfect faith must be answered. Looking at me quite wildly. I began to feel a little uneasy. Then I saw. This was the side of him that frightened his poor pretty young wife. I tried to soothe him as one does, you know. Said, 'Of course, it was not sinful, and I thought one couldn't pray too much, if one just remembered that the *answer* lay in higher hands than ours.' And he hung on my words. So then I said, 'I see what it is, you've a slight touch of fever. Take an old woman's advice, and come back with me. I can put you right.' So he gave me an arm back to the pension. Then I dosed him. Just what I take myself. My dear, child-like trust, and absurdly grateful. Said I'd done him good, and he hoped I'd forget the nonsense he had talked.

Next day, he settled her on the terrace and left, smiling and cheerful as none of us had ever seen him. Really another man, and I took some credit to myself. 'You've had good news?' I asked as he passed. 'The best, the very best,' he answered. Really, my dear, I thought— But it wasn't what I thought then. Every day after that he went off for the whole afternoon. That went on for four—or was it five days? One forgets. And his wife watching him now; not serene any longer, but puzzled, restless, uneasy, and he perfectly content. Oh, far more, radiantly happy. As sweet to her as ever, only it struck me she didn't *count*

any more. My dear, she felt she'd lost him, I'm sure of it. The usual horrid things were said; another woman, and all the rest of it. I did my best to stop them. And that poor young thing sitting on the terrace alone. Her eyes on the garden gate now. Watching for him to come back, my dear. And Angy gloating—one can only use that word—saying, 'He is free! He has won!' till it made me cross to hear her.

Then it all came out, and the gossips looked foolish. Quite simple and sensible. He had adopted two lovely Italian babies. Such a good plan, though perhaps two——? Still, if they were twins—— I met him, carrying them out from San Giovannino just as I was going in. He was radiant. And I congratulated him. But then I dropped a little hint, not to neglect his wife for them.

'Shall I show them to her?' he asked, half-eager, but—well, half-surprised. 'I should,' I told him. He was off up the hill with long light strides, while I panted after him far behind. So I can't tell you this bit except from hearsay. No, not Angy, a friend of hers, but the same excitable kind of woman.

She declared his wife sprang up, furious, with arms out to keep them off. And he said, quite lightly, 'I've got them, in spite of you.' Then she *says* she exclaimed quite fiercely, 'But they're not yours, you've stolen them.' An absurd thing to say. And if you believe her (which I don't) he replied, 'Not mine? I've agonised to get them.' That's what she declares he said, but she's an exaggerated creature. What he probably said was, that he'd had a lot of trouble to persuade the father and mother. Italians are as fond of their children as we are, I expect. And these were lovely, two little angels. And as I said to Angy, when she told me all this, 'If true, where's your "stone woman"?' It made her angry, but she couldn't have it both ways. No logic at all.

What happened then? Oh, he went off, his babies cuddling up against him, and she sank back into her chair, and cried. Then Angy came in, and her friend flew to tell her. Angy went up to the poor young thing—to console her, she says. It's often hard to realise one's own motives. Angy is a very inquisitive woman. Well, what she says is again all I have to go by. She maintains that poor pretty girl gasped out, 'He's stolen them! It's horrible! I saw them—in the altar-piece at San Giovannino's.'

If she said it, I or any sensible person would have known she was hysterical, dosed her with sal volatile, and thought no more about

it. But poor Angy—no common sense, my dear—rushes off to San Giovannino's. Collides with the sacristan—half-blind and a fool, my dear—tells him that cock-and-bull story, he rushes off to tell the priest, Angy too, I believe, and the thing is done. One thing you may be sure of, no one looked at the picture. Angy *says* she did, and no doubt, she thinks she is telling the truth, but—

And Italians are so emotional. Next day there was a procession, and prayers and all kinds of fuss. For the restoration of the bambini, my dear, stolen by an atheist foreigner. Nobody knew where the young man was. The priest called to see Mrs. Darrell, but she wouldn't admit him, much less give him—what he really wanted—an interview with the poor pretty young wife, hiding frightened in her room, praying for her husband to be restored to her in his right mind. Mrs. Darrell told me so.

Then the very next day that sacristan comes whooping up the hill, shouting to everyone, 'Behold them! They had returned. The Madonna had restored them. All was well.' Mrs. Darrell saw *him*, and scolded him well. Most fluent Italian, my dear, a native couldn't have been more voluble. It's a great thing to be able to scold in a foreign tongue. When people try to cheat one—I've often envied her. The silly old man went away quite crestfallen. So there was another procession, of thanksgiving this time—too muddle-headed, for a thing they had never lost, my dear!—and the whole town in it or looking on. Useless to put that view of it before them, of course. Simply fancy and short-sight on Angy's part, and sheer silliness on the sacristan's. I didn't try. I went to my room until all the noise and finery and excitement had passed. But I blamed Angy's unbridled imagination for it all. Balls of crystal, and black velvet, my dear. One can see anything after that.

All I can tell you is, when I went to San Giovannino's the morning after, the picture was as it is to-day. As it always has been, whatever Angy and the Colonel choose to say. Backing each other up, as they invariably do.

But what I saw was far more dreadful. Terribly sad, and a fact, but nothing mysterious about it at all. I gave such a scream, though I pride myself on no nerves. So the sacristan came running, the silly old man who had spread the news. This time he had something to spread. He knelt and gaped, first at the altar-piece, the old idiot! then at poor young Bassett-Joyce lying on the altar-

steps, his temple against a sharp edge. That did it, you may be sure. They are shining and slimy with damp and age, in fact most dangerous, uneven too.

Dead? Oh, yes, quite dead, and I knew it, but I sent the sacristan off for a doctor. There he lay with the happiest smile. One cried to see it. And his arms clasped on his breast as though he pressed something to him, but nothing there, of course.

The ghost? Oh, mention it to Angy, and you will hear all about the ghost. I went straight to my room when I went in—terrified of seeing that poor young thing, as you may imagine. Told it all to Mrs. Darrell there, and said I could see nobody. She had scarcely gone, when Angy bursts in, white as a sheet, and *gibbering*—one can only call it that—about meeting him in the church porch, striding out, a smile on his face, and his two babies in his arms. When there he lay, dead on the altar-steps, at that very moment. Irreverent I call it, to talk of a ghost in that romancing way. A man one had known oneself too. But that is poor Angy all over. Facts do not exist for her.

The wife? Ah, poor young thing, she was in a dreadful state. Floods of tears. Calling him to come back, only come back, and she would give him everything. But too late for anything of that sort, of course. I sat up with her several nights. She never saw anything. And don't talk to me of astral bodies, for I'm afraid I should say, 'Astral fiddlesticks!' The whole thing was a series of simple matter-of-fact events, as I'm sure you'll agree. So nice of you. Yes, of course, there *can* only be one way of looking at it.

Ah, the lunch-bell. And I'm quite ready for it. Talking makes one hungry, don't you think?

THE CHRONOLOGY IN THACKERAY'S NOVELS.

BY W. A. HIRST.

TROLLOPE was undoubtedly in error when he charged Thackeray with indolence. Although he did not work by the clock, like Trollope, every novel was not only the product of hard work and hard reading, but, better still, it was the fruit of a life of study and reflection and action—the result of the enjoyment which he had always taken in men, manners, and books.

One phase of this many-sided genius is his exquisite chronological accuracy. Every novel is connected with every other novel or tale by slight or strong links, and all the events are in chronological harmony; the dates of each character agree with those of his neighbours or ancestors, and, further, all the many historical events, which occur in the novels, are correct both in relation to themselves and the fictitious events. To this general statement we shall be able to find very few exceptions.

Sir Walter Scott, it will be remembered, thought that chronology was made for slaves and treated it with a lordly indifference. In *Kenilworth* Shakespeare is represented (when he was actually twelve years old) as a young man who had just written *Venus and Adonis* and *The Tempest*; and there are a dozen other anachronisms hardly less flagrant. Such liberties would have been abhorrent to Thackeray, for this reason, that he had served a laborious apprenticeship to the classics, and, therefore, any intellectual untidiness or inaccuracy was distasteful to him. Not a slip in English, nor in scholarship, nor in historical accuracy was permitted.

This interwreathing of his works of fiction was very Thackerayan and, again, was part of the classical tradition. He knew that *Materiam superabat opus*—that to an artist style was more important than matter, and it was his pleasure to take the same matter and display his skill in working it into new forms. Late in life he said with his accustomed wistful irony: 'All I can do now is to bring out my old puppets and put new bits of ribbon on them.' The puppets lasted out his time.

In Thackeray's day this practice was by no means usual with novelists, although Richardson and Fielding had employed it, not

very conspicuously, and with no special artistry. The novels of Dickens are in watertight compartments, and, although in Scott characters at times reappear, this feature is merely due to the accident that he chose to lay the scenes of two different novels in approximately the same period. Trollope took the Thackerayan method ready made, and his work is the better for it; we are eager to hear more of Glencora and Mrs. Proudie and Dr. Thorne; they are too good to be imprisoned in the covers of a single volume. Nowadays the Thackeray-Trollope method is quite common.

We will take a cardinal date from which to look backwards and forward, and thereby we shall see the nice dovetailing of all events, whether fictitious or historical. This is the death of John Pendennis, which took place early in the winter of 1828. It may be added that *Pendennis*—one of the most delightful of all novels—is the keystone of the arch. Pendennis himself, being a 'literary character,' edits the Newcome papers and records the early history of his young friend Philip, and all the characters, either directly or a few times removed, flow into the book from the past or out of it into the near future.

We know that Pendennis Senior died in the winter, for, when the boy was brought from Grey Friars into Devonshire by Major Pendennis, and walked over the little estate which was now his property, he 'blushed to think that it was only last holidays that he had in a manner robbed the great apple tree.' Thus his last holidays must have been in September, the apple month. It is clear that a good many months must have elapsed between Pendennis's death and the 'fine morning in the full London season,' when Major Pendennis opens the story, for young Pendennis had time to transact a good deal of sport, politics, reading and love-making in that interval. So the father must have died in November or December.

We know that the year was 1828. Young Pendennis headed the Clavering voters who came 'to plump for the Protestant Champion,' and he also sent to the local paper 'a tremendous denunciation of Popery, and a solemn warning to the people of England to rally against emancipating the Roman Catholics.' At this time the country was astir over Roman Catholic Emancipation, which passed through the Houses of Parliament in March and April, 1829, to the consternation of the admirers of the Duke of Wellington. Also the very first appearance of Thackeray in print was a parody of *The Minstrel Boy*, deriding a speech made by the

emancipist Sheil on Penenden Heath. This appeared in an Exeter paper. Accurate indeed is the chronology.

In the summer of 1829 Major Pendennis states that Arthur's age is eighteen. This was exactly the age of Thackeray, who was born in 1811.

We may now move backwards and trace the characters to Stuart times. We know from the Genealogical Tree that Philip Firmin—a schoolboy in the early days of the Pendennis's married life—was born in 1825. *Philip* is, of course, a sequel to *A Shabby Genteel Story*, which is dated by the Waterloo year, and the age of the Little Sister and like details agree with the chronology of the more important books. We may, however, note one of the rare inaccuracies. Young Viscount Cinqbars is said in the Genealogical Tree to have died in 1824, whereas in 1835, in *A Shabby Genteel Story*, he takes a prominent part in the duel.

Vanity Fair largely circles round the Waterloo year. This fine novel is the most detached of all; few of its characters reappear. Colonel Dobbin is seen for a moment at Colonel Newcome's housewarming party, and Clive remarks on the doubt attaching to the title of Becky Sharp, Lady Crawley. Young Crawley, born in 1816, was a schoolboy with Clive at Grey Friars about 1827. Old Osborne speaks of 'the Honourable Mr. Deuceace,' who figures prominently in the *Yellowplush Papers*, and Becky's friends, Captain Blackball and others of his ragged regiment, are seen in *The Newcomes*. James Crawley, on that unlucky evening when his pipe was put out, refers to young Ringwood, Lord Cinqbars' son.

However, the main link between *Vanity Fair* and the other novels is the Marquis of Steyne, who is a leading character therein and fairly prominent in *Pendennis*, and here is one of the main breaks in our author's chronological accuracy. Francis Charles Seymour-Conway was born in 1777 and lived a life of distinction in society and politics, being a favourite of the Prince Regent. He succeeded his father as fourth Marquis of Hertford in 1822, and died in 1842. Gaunt House, or Hertford House, now houses the Wallace Collection, which magnificent treasure was amassed by himself and his son. He died, as I have said, in 1842. Now in *Vanity Fair* the wicked Marquis dies in 1830, while in *Pendennis*, considerably later, he is alive and well, and so, for once, Thackeray is inconsistent with actual fact and his own fiction. In all probability the error was deliberate, as suiting the purposes of *Vanity Fair*, and giving occasion for the satiric touch that his death was

due to 'the shock occasioned to his lordship's sensibilities by the downfall of the ancient French monarchy.'

The Marquis of Hertford is usually considered one of the world's worst noblemen. Greville, an accurate judge somewhat this side of charity, says: 'His life and death were equally disgusting and revolting to every good and moral feeling.' Thackeray paints him in dark colours, and Disraeli gives even a worse picture of him in *Coningsby* as Lord Monmouth. It may be that he is not as black as he is painted, but he was one of a régime that trusted that God would think twice before damning a man of his quality. Again, we may notice the rigid accuracy of Thackeray in the smallest trifles. He makes Wenham (John Wilson Croker) think—without giving utterance—in answer to a sneer of the Marquis: 'My lord, you need not talk; I'm three years younger than you are, and twice as well *conservé*.' Croker was born in 1780.

It should be added that it is a mystery that Thackeray should depict the excellent Croker as so despicable a character. *Wenham* is said to be his playful way of writing *Venom*. The only possible reason could be that Croker was a friend (on most honourable terms) of the wicked Marquis.

Before dealing with the historical novels, it will be convenient to dispose of the Newcome family, whose beginnings go back to the times of the *Virginians*. 'When Mr. Washington was heading the American rebels with a courage, it must be confessed, worthy of a better cause,' Thomas Newcome Senior came up to London. 'No sooner did his business prosper' than he married his sweetheart; thus Colonel Newcome would be born about 1782. Now, towards the end of *The Newcomes*, just before the unlucky election, Colonel Newcome announces that he is 'nearly seventy years of age, gentlemen.'

If he had said *sixty* the chronology would have been easier, as the age stated seems to leave rather too long a gap between the marriage of Pendennis and the death of Colonel Newcome. However, we will take the dates of his life. He would go out to India about 1800. He married comparatively late in life. The Countess de Florac wrote in 1820: 'I have read in the English journals not only that you are married but that you have a son.' We know that Clive must have been born about 1816, since he came to Grey Friars as quite a small boy when Pendennis was near the end of his school career. Colonel Newcome took his first furlough when Pendennis and Warrington were living together in the Temple,

and Pendennis had already made a success with his first novel. This would be about 1834.

The Colonel's furlough occupied the time taken up by the second half of *Pendennis*, for, just before leaving England, the Colonel refers to Pendennis's engagement to Miss Amory. This would be in 1836. Thackeray, he it observed, married in that year. Colonel Newcome's stay in India must have been somewhat prolonged, Soon after his return to England he dates a letter, Feb. 12th, 184—, which, of course, does not help us much. Still it may bring us reasonably near the date when the good Colonel would be nearly seventy, and thus corroborate his statement. If the vague date were about 1848, we should be near the mark, for we must infer that poor little Rosey died after three or four years of matrimony.

Now there was a General Election in 1852, and this date agrees well with the Colonel's statement. The only difficulties are that Clive gives us the impression of being younger than thirty-six—which was a considerable age in Early Victorian days—and Colonel Newcome must have spent more than twelve years in India. The events in the latter part of *The Newcomes* seem hardly adequate to fill so long a period of time.

Ethel Newcome writes (presumably in 1852): 'Little Barnes comes on bravely with his Latin.' Now the elder Barnes was married some time after Colonel Newcome's departure from England—in 1836—and so if he were a younger child, young Barnes might be about twelve. But the chronology is somewhat strained. On the other hand, Ethel refers to her two younger brothers as fully fledged young men—say about twenty-five—and as they were not very young children in 1834, their ages fit in chronologically with the narrative.

On the whole, we may place the Election, without serious inaccuracy, in 1852, and, in that case, Colonel Newcome's death would take place in 1853, or 1854, actually during the publication of *The Newcomes*.

Before we take the two historical novels we may say a word about the curious and powerful *Barry Lyndon*. This has a very slight connection with Thackeray's group. It is loosely linked with Fitzboodle—one of Thackeray's least interesting characters—and we have references to Lord Tiptoff and his family, whose descendants appear in *The Great Hoggarty Diamond*. We also hear: 'There was a young attaché of the English embassy, my Lord Deuceace,

afterwards Viscount and Earl of Crabs in the English peerage, who was playing high.' This must have been the father of the abominable old Earl of Crabs in *The Yellowplush Papers* and the grandfather of the Honourable Algernon Percy Deuceace. However, Thackeray cannot resist manufacturing a tie, however loose, to bring his book into the group. Towards the end of *The Virginians* Sir George Warrington says; 'A notorious adventurer, gambler, and *spadassin*, calling himself the Chevalier de Barry, and said to be a relative of the mistress of the French king, but afterwards turning out to be an Irishman of low extraction, was in constant attendance upon the earl and countess [of Castlewood] at this time, and conspicuous for the audacity of his lies, the extravagance of his play, and somewhat mercenary gallantry towards the other sex, and a ferocious bravo courage, which, however, failed him upon one or two awkward occasions, if common report said true.' But *Barry Lyndon*, in every respect, stands apart from the rest of Thackeray's work.

To turn to *The Virginians*. George Warrington is the grandfather of the excellent Warrington, the friend of Pendennis. Warrington says: 'At my father's death, I paid what debts I had contracted at college, etc.' His father was Sir Miles Warrington, to whom George, the Virginian, refers as serving in the campaign of 1793 and having 'taken Valenciennes for nothing.' Sir Miles must have died about 1832.

The Warrington twin brothers, George and Harry, are the heroes of *The Virginians*. They would be born about 1734, being active young men at the time of Braddock's expedition in 1754. The chronology is perfectly accurate. Harry takes part in the St. Malo expedition of 1758, and the various events of the Seven Years' War are described in their due sequence. Wolfe is a prominent character in the book. It has been suggested that General Lambert would not have been in æsthetic advance of his age in laughing at Home's *Douglas* (performed in 1757), which delighted all the 'best judges,' but Boswell reports Dr. Johnson as saying to the elder Sheridan: 'How came you, Sir, to give Home a gold medal for writing that foolish play? and defied Mr. Sheridan to show ten good lines in it.' Old Lambert, whose mind and reading were somewhat in Johnson's mould, might well have scoffed at a frigid and pretentious work.

The fault of *The Virginians* is that it contains too much history, and, in spite of many brilliant scenes, is duller than Thackeray's

best. He portrays the War of Independence accurately, but he nods a good deal.

Fact and fiction are much more skilfully interwoven in *Esmond*, of which Taine says that 'Thackeray has not written a less popular or more beautiful story.' The history of Europe and the fortunes of the Esmonds are so closely associated that it would be a very lengthy task to follow their course; only a few of the more important episodes can be given. Here Thackeray came to his work fresh; he was glad to turn from Mayfair to his beloved eighteenth-century writers, and he assimilated the spirit and the very language. Hardly any other instance can be given of a novelist adopting the diction of the period without bravura or the use of Wardour Street English. Scott is incomparable in his conversations as in all else, but the language is his own with the addition of antique tags. The effect is excellent but, like Ennius, he is, in this respect, great in genius but rudimentary in art. Esmond, Addison, Steele, and the others speak and write the dialect of the Augustan Age with a very faint sub-tone of the Victorian, which completely removes *Esmond* from the category of a *tour de force*. Thackeray might say exactly what Scott modestly said about himself when discussing his imitators: 'They have to read old books, and consult antiquarian collections, to get their knowledge; I write because I have long since read such works, and possess, thanks to a strong memory, the information which they have to seek for.'

The connection of *Esmond* with *The Virginians* is familiar to every one. Rachel, the daughter of Henry Esmond, who had migrated to Virginia, made a short visit to England and married George Warrington, the younger son of a Suffolk Baronet. Their married life was of brief duration, as the husband was killed by Indians after a year or two. Their offspring was the Virginians, the twin brothers, George and Harry. Colonel Esmond died while they were schoolboys, i.e. in 1744, or soon after.

It is not necessary to explain the somewhat complicated plot of *Esmond*; all that is needed is to show the position of Esmond himself in relation to the other members of the family. Late in the reign of Charles II Thomas, third Viscount Castlewood, married his cousin Isabel, by whom he had a son who died young. But Thomas had already contracted a secret marriage with Gertrude Maes, a Flemish girl, who bore him Henry Esmond, the hero of the story. Thus Henry was the rightful heir, and, as his mother was alive at the time of the second marriage, the offspring, had

the boy lived, would have been illegitimate. But the first marriage was unknown to the world, and Henry, being deemed illegitimate, was brought up as a poor dependant of the great family. When Thomas Esmond was slain at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, Francis, his nephew, succeeded as fourth Viscount. His wife was Rachel Armstrong, the mother of two children, the elder being the brilliant Beatrice, and the younger Francis, the fifth Viscount.

Beatrice, as is well known, became successively Mrs. Tusher and the Baroness Bernstein, and died, an old woman, in *The Virginians*. Young Frank, who in *Esmond* is a leading and lovable character, disappears with the end of the book. As a very young man he married Clotilda de Wertheim in the Low Countries. We are left to infer that he died at some unspecified date, seeing that in 1754 or 1755 his son, Eugene, was reigning at Castlewood as sixth Viscount. By his first wife Frank had Lady Maria Esmond, whose birth is recorded in *Esmond*, and also Eugene, the polite but disreputable nobleman who fleeces his cousin Harry. Frank married a second time, leaving issue the rascally Will Esmond and Lady Fanny, who plays but a small part in *The Virginians*.

Now Henry Esmond in course of time discovers that he is legitimate, but magnanimously refuses to produce his proofs or press his claim; thus the title and estates are enjoyed by the younger branch of the Esmond family.

At the accession of George I, Esmond, disappointed in love and politics, marries the widow of the fourth Viscount and retires to Virginia, where he has an estate, presented to him by Frank, the then Viscount.

With few exceptions the long train of real and fictitious events moves in perfect harmony. However, there are a few trifling discordances. Dick Steele is represented as a trooper in the Life Guards in the winter of 1688-9; in fact, he did not take to soldiering till 1694. The most conspicuous wresting of historical fact is in the case of the Duke of Hamilton. He was created Duke in 1698, not 1690, as stated by Thackeray. The trifling error is probably a mere slip of the pen. But the other liberty is more in the manner of Scott. Thackeray represents him as a widower, whereas James Douglas, Duke of Hamilton (1658-1712), married in 1698, as second wife, Elizabeth Digby, who survived him thirty-two years. This error is doubtless deliberate. It was necessary for the purposes of the story that Beatrice should be engaged to a great nobleman,

and, as the stock of eligible Dukes was scarce, Thackeray had to take Hamilton and suppress his wife.

There is also an anachronism, of small importance in itself, but so glaring that we must suppose Thackeray's memory to have been at fault. The trifling allusion introduced was not worth such a violation of chronology. Chatting together in the later days of Queen Anne's reign, Beatrice and Esmond refer to the story of *Peter Wilkins*. Now this book, the work of Robert Paltock, an attorney, was published in 1751. *Peter Wilkins* is a work now almost forgotten, but it was warmly praised by Coleridge, Southey, Scott, and Lamb. This is one of Thackeray's very few slips of that nature, though he not uncommonly forgets the Christian name of some minor character, e.g. in one place he calls the Rev. Esmond Francis, in another Edward.

One great charm of *Esmond* is that all the characters and events are natural and harmonious—there is no discrepancy between the events and characters, whether they are the creations of Thackeray's brain or veritable sons of Adam. His treatment of Addison, for instance, is excellent. Soon after the Battle of Blenheim Addison was meditating his poem, *The Campaign*, and there is a charming scene of the discussion of the subject, when Esmond 'drew the river on the table *aliquo mero*, and with the aid of some bits of tobacco-pipe showed the advance of the left wing, where he had been engaged.' Addison is a life-like reproduction, with his genius, his charm, and his fondness for Latin poetry. He is made to quote Claudian. Thackeray touches lightly on a less estimable characteristic; one night he met Addison in Kensington 'with ever so slight a touch of *merum* in his voice.' Addison was, in fact, a confirmed tippler—Horace Walpole says he died of brandy.

Thackeray, indeed, paints an extremely unfair and misleading picture of the great Duke of Marlborough, but this a misjudgment, not an inaccuracy. For some reason Marlborough, although a Whig, was very badly treated by Whig historians, and Thackeray was but following the fashion of the times. His treatment of Swift is much worse, and it has long been acknowledged as the most serious of Thackeray's misinterpretations that he portrays this brave and warm-hearted man of genius as the mean and snarling misanthrope who appears in the *Lectures*, and briefly in *Esmond*.

Bolingbroke is, perhaps, shown too much as a reckless man of pleasure, but at that time his genius had not matured. The treat-

ment of the Old Pretender is probably correct; it certainly reads well.

The Webb episode is said to be the best account ever written of that somewhat faded transaction; the duels are admirable, and the life of society, literature, and drama is sketched with an unerring hand. Turn where we will in *Esmond*, we shall find that the author is complete master of his subject and has everything in harmony.

We have thus traced the Warringtons, Esmonds, and Newcomes back as far as they go, and it now only remains to deal with the events and characters—such as remain—after the death of John Pendennis.

Pendennis and Clive become intimate, and we have already noticed the main events in their career. We may note a tiny anachronism belonging to that time. Colonel Newcome's furlough belonged to the years 1834-5. The gallant soldier, after thirty years in India, had got rather out of touch with the literary fashions of the younger generation. 'He heard opinions that amazed and bewildered him,' among them being the intimation that 'a young gentleman of Cambridge, who had lately published two volumes of verses, might take rank with the greatest poets of all.' The good Colonel, who had been brought up on Pope and Johnson, was astounded. 'He tried in vain to construe *Oenone*.' So far, all right, for Tennyson's volume of 1832, which delighted many of the discerning, included *Oenone*. But now comes the slip. '*Ulysses* he could understand; but what were these prodigious laudations bestowed on it?' *Ulysses* did not appear till 1842. Thackeray, of course, would be delighted to take the opportunity of complimenting his dear friend, for to be dispraised by Colonel Newcome, with his Johnsonian traditions, was no small praise.

Pendennis and Laura take a considerable hand in *Philip*, which interesting novel began in the CORNHILL of January, 1861. Thackeray was now dealing with the younger generation; Philip would be barely thirty-six when Thackeray began the tale of his life. The characters of *A Shabby Genteel Story* of course make their re-entrances, but otherwise we do not meet many old friends. The minor character, Dr. Goodenough, appears from *Pendennis* and *The Newcomes*, and we have a glimpse of Helen Pendennis and the admirable Major. The tale is now nearly complete. *Lovel the Widower* (also a CORNHILL product—it was found by the side of the dying Macaulay) is but a slight work. Warrington and Fitz-

boodle flit across the stage, but the little story, though readable, is but an imitation of Thackeray by himself, and is far behind his best work.

We have thus traced the chronology of Thackeray in every work of importance, and hope to have sustained the proposition which we set forth at the outset, that he observes with minute care chronological correctness, that the events in the lives of the various characters are in harmony, and are consistent with all the historical occurrences that arise, and that the few inconsistencies are either extremely trifling or deliberately permitted for the purposes of the story. And, more important than any formal consistency, all the characters and all the events are in harmony with nature and history.

THROUGH OXFORD TOWN.

THROUGH Oxford town the stream winds slow,
The mirrored towers within it glow ;
Tranced as in dream, the silver tide
Thus, beauty-burthened, would abide,
And seems to pause for ever so.

Alas for seeming ! Lean ; look ; know
The reluctant waters onwards go,
Pressed on, that younger waves may glide
Through Oxford town.

We also, youthful, long ago
Dreamed 'neath these walls, whose lovely show
Deep in our hearts their image dyed.
O youth, who thrust our youth aside,
Flow softly ; 'tis but once you flow
Through Oxford town.

A. V. STUART.

A DOCTOR'S DIAGNOSIS.

BY EDITH AGAR.

'SOPHIA,' said I, 'for the first time in our lives, you are proving a disappointment!'

'Oh, Tom! And I *did* want your visit to be a real success. What ever am I doing?'

My sister's face became as long as its comfortable middle-aged roundness would permit.

'I've always thought of you as the one person who never tried to make people do things they didn't want because you thought it was good for them.'

'I know,' rejoined Sophia deprecatingly. 'It's so much easier, and pleasanter, to leave them alone. People are so disagreeable when they're doing what they don't like. But I'm generally very much disapproved of, and I should have thought *you* . . .'

'You mean because I'm a doctor? Not a bit of it! I saw your point when I was a G.P. Now, as a Harley Street Nerve Specialist, oh lor'! How I do long sometimes to let my patients go to the devil in their own way, and you're proposing to give me a dose of the physic I'm always forcing on other people.'

'You shall go to the devil if you want to, dear,' said Sophia comfortably, 'if you can manage it. We're very quiet here, we don't even play Auction Bridge. But as to my forcing doses on you!'

'You're suggesting I should get up and go to a garden party with you this afternoon.'

'But *that*,' said Sophia seriously, 'isn't like physic. I only want you to go because I know you'll have a delightful time and meet somebody really interesting. Clodia Minstrell gets people who wouldn't dream of going to any of the other houses here.'

'It's a pretty name,' I said, 'a touch of Renaissance classic.'

'Clodia Minstrell's wonderful,' pursued my sister, keeping to the main point, 'and Sylvia Kane's really just as nice, in her way. They live together in a charming old house, with a lovely garden and lots of money to keep it up. Clodia is a good bit older than Miss Kane but she's so vital and splendid you'd hardly know.

Sylvia Kane's rather fragile. She just lives for Clodia. No! you needn't look like that! It's the most delightful example of a woman's friendship I've ever seen. Clodia does *everything* for Sylvia, even chooses her dresses, and Sylvia thinks Clodia absolutely perfect.'

Sophia proceeded to embroider her theme, but she is not literary and has a great predilection for well-worn *clichés*. Consequently my perverse mind registered the impression of an over-exuberant, 'bossy' female, and a colourless sycophant with no constitution.

However, they seemed to have a nice garden, and it was very plain that dear old Sophia desired exceedingly to go to their party. I gave in, I hope with a good grace.

'Can I go as I am?' was the next question.

'Of course you can,' said Sophia. 'You look so nice in tweeds, not a bit like a specialist. You know,' she added, 'when you wear a top-hat you always do make me think of that handsome actor we saw as "Sir Ralph Bloomfield Bonington."'

I thought Sophia's remark a trifle silly, and the slight feeling of crossness it engendered was not lessened by our having to start out at the odious hour of half-past three.

After a hot and dusty walk, we arrived at a mellow Georgian house, and my normal good humour returned as we mounted its flight of shallow steps and paused under the perfect shell over its front door to ring the old wrought-iron bell-pull.

No one could have remained in a huff confronted by so harmonious a product of a stately age, and I rejoiced in its surrounding lawns and flower-beds the more, remembering a recent visit to a millionaire patient who, through an unfortunate combination of too much money and unusual bad taste, had pulled off that really difficult achievement, a vulgar garden.

A smiling parlourmaid, an old friend of Sophia's and properly interested in a celebrated brother, led us through a high-windowed, sunny hall to the main garden, where about twenty people were contemplating herbaceous borders, criticising roses, and grouping themselves under the beautiful trees that here and there shaded the velvet turf.

'Here's Clodia!' said my sister, and I found myself silently apologising for having, before I saw her, applied the terms, 'over-exuberant, bossy female' to the delightful creature coming swiftly over the lawn to greet us. I noted with much approval the fine upstanding figure, to which modern garments had been becomingly

adapted, the bright brown hair under the wide-brimmed hat (no shorn fox this, thank Heaven!), the warm colouring of the face unsullied with powder, the smiling eyes. I hope she would have forgiven me because I couldn't help realising, as a medico, that she was also the fortunate possessor of a splendid circulation and 'young arteries.'

She greeted us with the utmost friendliness, congratulated Sophia on my docility—there had evidently been doubts cast on my sister's ability to induce me to come—and hoped I wasn't bored by tea-parties.

Then Sophia joined one of the groups on the lawn, and Miss Minstrell walked by my side chatting about flowers. That is to say she began with flowers, but I soon realised I was being subjected to a familiar process; one I invariably employ myself in the first ten minutes with a new patient, when, by what they think is a casual conversation, I gauge their habits and temperaments, generally with a view to discounting what they say about themselves later on.

Feeling sure that Miss Minstrell was investigating *my* habits merely in order to give me a good time, I seconded her efforts in a way my victims seldom do. The result was I soon found myself having an enthralling conversation with a little chip of a lawyer, whose hobby, like mine, was medical jurisprudence, about which he seemed to know the last word, while to us was added later a brilliant writer of detective stories, who told us how he worked out his plots.

This happy encounter was only broken up by a tea-bell, when Miss Kane gently shepherded us to a circle of cake, fruit, and flower laden tables in the shade of a big cedar.

Though not as striking as her friend, Miss Kane seemed to be extraordinarily nice; gentle and gay and very courteous, and, if rather delicate looking, neither morbid nor invalidish.

At first, both ladies were too busy getting everyone exactly what they liked best to eat and drink, to give themselves a chance in conversation, but after Miss Minstrell had seen to it that lovers of China tea were not supplied with milk soup, and Miss Kane had supervised cakes and sandwiches to the general satisfaction, we all began to talk and I came to the conclusion that Sophia's judgment was better than her ability to convey impressions.

Miss Minstrell and Miss Kane certainly appeared to be an exemplary pair of friends, with nothing overbearing on the one

side or doting on the other, and one could only guess at their strong mutual affection from their air of happiness and content and the perfect way in which they backed each other up and combined to make their party 'go.'

Perhaps I did notice that Miss Kane would now and again lightly start a topic that would give Miss Minstrell a special chance of shining, and certainly the latter displayed Miss Kane to us as a dramatic critic of ability and spoke with pride of her successes in local amateur theatricals. But neither of them overdid it, and we were all encouraged to talk on our pet subjects and our opinions received without rancour even on such burning subjects as Free Trade, the Prayer Book, and the position of women in the modern state.

On this last, Miss Minstrell proved to hold strong but very unexpected views for a lady of her force of character.

'Clodia, you are quite impossible!' lamented a woman guest. 'We don't ask you to grant equality to the sexes, but you might allow us to be of a little use in the scheme of creation.'

'Miss Minstrell,' put in someone else, 'would even like to do away with the good old phrase "Women and children first"!'.

'Oh no!' said Miss Minstrell, 'and certainly not in the case of children. I think I might alter it a little and say "Women *with* children first." As for unattached spinsters, I don't believe that they would be doing work that could not be done as well, or better, by men. . . .'

(There was a feminine chorus, in which some male voices joined, of 'Oh, Clodia!')

'... and in the case of non-workers!' (She spoke with sudden seriousness.) 'Well, if I happened to be in a shipwreck and there wasn't time to save everybody, I should just stand aside.'

Her evident sincerity made a little pause in the careless talk, which I broke by saying:

'If I were on board I should make a point of seeing you into the first boat.'

Everyone said, 'Hear, hear!' and Sophia added:

'Then you'd better go and book a passage on the *Labuania* for next February. They're going to America.'

'Oh, do book a passage, Doctor!' said Miss Minstrell. 'I shouldn't allow you to interfere with my liberty to drown myself if I thought fit, but we should love to have you as a companion.'

I said something suitable, but I was looking at Miss Kane, and

getting an inkling, for the first time, of that adoration of which Sophia had spoken.

It's part of my job to see into people's minds, and it was easy to read in that sensitive, expressive face, grown thin and wistful looking, its owner's thought that death in a shipwreck in her friend's company was less to be dreaded than living on without her, as in the normal course of things she must expect to do. It seemed to me very natural. She'd be a forlorn old lady, deprived of that stimulating companionship, and her grip on life was not strong enough to make her fear the physical side of dying.

She was not of those who, in old country parlance, 'lie long' in illness, and, in a catastrophe, little would suffice to kill her.

But I wondered if either she or Miss Minstrell had any idea what the pangs of dissolution might mean to a splendid physique in the full tide of its strength. I returned abruptly to a sense of social duty, and thinking it well to break up Miss Kane's reverie, started a conversation with her to which she responded rather absently.

Soon after, we moved away from the tables under the cedar trees and strolled, chatting, about the garden until the party broke up and Sophia and I walked home in the cool of the summer evening.

'Thank you for taking me to such a nice party, Sophia,' I said, 'and next time I come, if you offer to take me to see those charming ladies again, I'll accept without any fuss.'

'What a fool I am! Fancying impossible things like that!'

Miss Kane was alone in the music-room of the *Labuania* and that was her first thought as her mind began to work again.

It had been extinguished for a moment in an icy blackness after that lightning dart of instinctive conviction. 'This is disaster!'

The power of seeing came back, and her glance fell on the hideous 'raised' velvet of the sofa she was sitting on.

Somehow it recalled her nursery days, when she used to shut her eyes tight and think about death, and then, opening them again on homely surroundings, feel the immense discrepancy between that grim fact and chairs and high fender, not to be reconciled, however hard she thought.

'You couldn't be shipwrecked in a place that looked like the lounge of a station hotel. What an idea!' She held firmly to the idea for some minutes, but her ears had begun to listen again and to distinguish the various sounds making up a tumult that

had sprung up outside ; and slowly, and this time with a curious absence of shock or panic, she realised that the impossible had occurred and that she was going to be shipwrecked in actual fact.

'I must go to Clodia at once !' was her next thought.

There was no doubt in her mind as to what Clodia would do. Tumult might rage without, but Clodia would stay quietly apart, not stirring hand or foot to save herself.

'If there was a shipwreck I should just stand aside.'

From what seemed an immense distance of time, the words came back to her, and with them too her own thought : 'How nice to stay and be drowned with Clodia and never have to dread living on alone without her !'

Then she suddenly understood that her wish was going to be granted. She realised too that she was feeling just as she had fancied she would, quite tranquil and not in the least afraid of death. Perhaps her body was still numbed by that first shock, for she was only conscious that she felt very tired and cold, that her pulses hardly seemed to beat, and if she hadn't been going to Clodia, she wouldn't have minded stopping on that ugly sofa and going fast asleep. No ! It wouldn't take long to drown her. She remembered thinking so that summer afternoon, and how it had been quite difficult to get away from her imaginings and talk to Sophia's nice doctor brother.

Everything was happening just as she had pictured it, and her belief that it would go on so to the end grew so strong, that she made her way through the panic and confusion, feeling much as she did when she walked on to the stage in one of her dramatic club's performances, secure of her own part and knowing that others would play up.

And when she found Clodia her belief went on justifying itself.

For Clodia was firm to abide by the consequences of her convictions, though perhaps her controlled bearing had a sign of strain in it that Miss Kane had not expected, and the words were a little gasped out and unsteady as Miss Minstrell besought her friend in fitting terms of love and solicitude not to feel bound by another's views but to save herself.

Vain exhortations, silenced at last ; followed of necessity by a brief submitting of themselves to the marshalling of stewards and officers in the routine ordained for those in peril on the sea ; then the unnoticed withdrawal from the crowded deck back to the deserted music-room, and lastly the waiting, hand locked in hand,

while the noises outside went on unabated, and the objects in the room took on strange unnatural angles as the ship listed more and more in its sinking.

But as time went on, Miss Kane became aware of a new thought taking shape in her mind, one that had never had a place in that fancy picture of hers.

Perhaps it was suggested by the feel of Clodia Minstrell's hand, that strong warm hand, alive with little throbs and pulsings, so different to her own, clammy and ice-cold; but something made her wonder if dying was going to be quite the easy thing for Clodia that it was for her.

In growing perturbation she looked at her friend. How strong she was. How dreadfully full of life, with warm blood running swiftly through her veins, her eyes bright and wide open, her breath so deep drawn and quick.

Then Miss Kane's thought changed into an overmastering desire—that she might stay and drown, not with, but instead of Clodia. Surely there might still be a place for one in the last boat, even now! If she could only go and see!

Hardly knowing how it came about she found herself outside the music-room.

Sylvia Kane paused for a moment at the door. She had come back to the music-room, feeling like a person in a nightmare, faced by an impossible task that yet needs must be done. She thought of the desperate need for hurry, the one chance gone for ever in a few minutes, seconds rather. How could she, in so short a span, with her feeble personality, her slow moving wits, summon up the will power, frame the burning phrase that would send Clodia Minstrell back to life, leaving her friend to drown.

She opened the door. Clodia had not moved, except that both her hands now gripped the chair rail in front of her.

Desperately, struggling to be clear, Sylvia Kane began to speak. She told of an already loaded boat, the last, on the very point of departure, that might take just one more passenger.

Then she braced herself for her great appeal. It was not needed.

Before she could say the first word, Clodia Minstrell sprang up. She gave a hideous squawking cry and rushed blindly across the floor and away, thrusting Miss Kane aside in her passing with as little care as a bird takes of the hand that frees it from the net.

'I can't believe it's two years since I was here last!'

I looked round Sophia's pretty drawing-room and prosed on contentedly.

'Nothing's altered a bit. How restful it is to see the same old patterns! London women's drawing-rooms change about like kaleidoscopes. You've even got the same flowers and the same weather, and you're wearing the same frock and you don't look a day older.'

Sophia smiled and considered her frock.

'It was new when you came before. Now it's my "everyday".'

'You put it on when we went to see the two nice ladies who were so fond of each other. Are you going to take me to see them this afternoon? Oh, don't say that friendship's come to grief!'

For she was looking distressed.

'Broken all to bits!' she answered sadly. 'They were on the *Labuanian*,' she went on in answer to my concerned enquiries.

'But surely,' I said, 'the S.O.S. fetched up two big liners and every one was saved.'

'But they didn't know that beforehand,' said Sophia regretfully.

'What happened?' I asked, 'did Miss Minstrell stand aside as she said she would?'

'She did at first,' said Sophia cautiously.

'And Miss Kane?'

'She wanted Clodia to be saved instead of her.'

'I could imagine her doing that,' I put in.

'Well,' said Sophia, 'she was. I mean . . .' (she struggled with the difficulties of expression) 'she *did* go off on the *Labuanian*'s last boat and left Sylvia behind.'

'And did Miss Kane find out too late that she wasn't equal to the sacrifice?'

'Oh, no!' said Sophia decidedly. 'She told me that the only time she felt afraid was when she thought she wouldn't get Clodia to agree to it.'

'Then what?'

'It was just the way it all happened,' said Sophia conclusively.

'I don't suppose anyone knows that,' I said, hoping, I admit, to goad Sophia into being more explicit. 'Neither of those women would be likely to talk about it.'

'There you're wrong,' said Sophia. 'They both talked to me.'

'Of course! I ought to have known that. You're a nice

creature, Sophia. Anyone in great perturbation would naturally talk to you.'

'Yes, but it was all on account of my besetting sin,' said Sophia whimsically.

'You mean your habit of letting people alone?'

'Go to the devil in their own way, in fact,' she explained. 'They knew I shouldn't worry them to pick up pieces and begin a new life together, or nonsense of that sort.'

'You see, they've never met since the disaster. The boat Clodia was in was picked up by one liner, and the other one took off Sylvia and the other people left on board. No one heard anything for some time, and then I had a letter from Clodia, and some time afterwards Sylvia wrote to me too. They both confided in me and asked me to settle business things for them. I had to go and see each of them, of course, and by degrees each of them told me the whole story, or rather the two whole stories, and I don't know which was the more tragic.'

'And why would they never meet? ' I asked. 'I can imagine a host of reasons, but I should like to hear the real truth from you.'

'Well,' Sophia began, 'Clodia could never get over having behaved like a coward in front of Sylvia. She said it was all Sylvia's fault, too, and hated her for it.'

'Miss Kane's fault? ' I queried.

'Yes,' said Sophia, 'Clodia was sticking it pretty well, she told me, and Sylvia dashed in and said they were still putting people into the last boat, and Clodia suddenly lost control and rushed off to save herself.'

'And left Miss Kane, presumably, to drown.'

'Yes! And now she'll never forgive her for "coming and fussing her like that when she was all right." She said a rather dreadful thing too, that I've never forgotten. "I'd always thought of myself as Sylvia's cherisher and protector, and then, because she couldn't let me alone, I ran away and left her without compunction, and it was a positive relief to me to think that she would be drowned and we should never have to meet again . . ."

'Oh, Tom!' said Sophia, interrupting herself, 'perhaps I oughtn't to have told anyone that, but then you *are* a doctor, and they're different.'

'Perhaps you oughtn't to have even told a doctor, but anyway I shan't cast stones,' and remembering the gracious, kindly woman

I had seen two years before, I added, 'What a tragic confession, Sophia. Poor thing!'

'You know, Tom,' said Sophia reflectively, 'I always think Sylvia Kane's behaviour must have been very upsetting to Clodia; when she realised, I mean, that that little weak thing had dared to face death like a heroine while she was a miserable coward.'

'Yes,' I replied, 'and what she didn't realise was how much easier it was for "that little weak thing" to face drowning than a strong, splendid woman like Miss Minstrell.'

'But what about strong men?' objected Sophia.

'Strong men, my dear,' said I, 'would have been putting people into boats and allaying panic and so on, not sitting in a corner waiting to be drowned, with nothing to do but think.'

'Probably Miss Minstrell found out then that a mere theory about the position of women wasn't quite important enough to die for when the pinch came. One sees people dying quite happily for—love of God, for instance.'

'Oh. Religious people!' said Sophia. 'They hardly count. Of course religion didn't come in at all.'

'It generally does,' I said, 'in some form or other, when people pull off anything on a grand scale. However, if you object to bringing in the Deity . . .' ('Really Tom!' interjected Sophia) . . . 'let us say people can die from a passionate love of their fellow-men. It's quite as good an inspiration to sacrifice. Without it, well, I'm not surprised at poor Miss Minstrell's failure. She tried herself too high. What's become of her?'

'She's somewhere on the Continent, collecting statistics for the League of Nations.'

'Good!' I ejaculated.

'It's a dismal occupation,' Sophia said.

'Still,' I rejoined, 'she's able to be of use, and she hasn't gone under. But it's hard on that poor little Miss Kane. She's living on alone after all, and without those august consolations that can temper a bereavement by death.'

'She was the more hopeless of the two, if you'd wanted to patch things up I mean,' Sophia said. 'It was pretty awful,' she went on, 'the way Clodia behaved. Sylvia had been so afraid she'd never agree to leave her friend, and the moment she heard about the boat, she threw Sylvia aside and fled "like a bird" she told me. You know, horrid things in nets, that peck at you and squawk

as they fly away! Clodia squawked like that. *Clodia!* I hate to think of it.'

'The body is a very shameless thing, Sophia, when it gets the better of one. But I don't wonder Miss Kane couldn't get over what she must have felt to be such utterly callous unkindness.'

'She didn't seem to think so much of that,' said Sophia in a puzzled tone. 'I found her very difficult to understand. She kept on saying that Clodia and Sylvia were never real people. She'd made them both up and when she couldn't believe in them any more, she'd nothing left. Perhaps her mind was a little touched.'

'I don't think so,' said I. 'I see what she meant.'

'I believe,' Sophia continued, 'she'd always thought of herself as distinguished by her devotion to what she supposed was a splendid character, and then, in a moment, all her grounds for being proud slipped away. Now,' she added, with a flash of unusual perception, 'she makes me think of something that's lost its foundation and is gradually crumbling away.'

'You've put it rather well,' I said. 'The real tragedy for both of them was the shattering of the picture each one had made of her own self.'

'Oh, you're getting too metaphysical for me,' complained Sophia.

'No, I'm not,' I answered. 'Our own idea of ourselves is the dearest thing we've got and we never forgive anyone who upsets it. Look at *us!* I'm really cross when you call me "Sir Ralph Bloomfield Bonington," and suppose anyone suggested you were an interfering woman with a passion for reforming your neighbours?'

Sophia grew round-eyed.

'But you *know* I'm not,' she said. 'And I *never* interfere, *never!*'

'Of course you don't,' I hastily agreed, 'and you were the one person who brought any comfort to those poor tragic women. By the way, where is Miss Kane?'

'Oh, she's here,' answered Sophia, a little impatiently, 'in the old house. It was the easiest thing for her, but she'd have done better to start afresh in new surroundings.'

'That sounds very dreary,' I said. 'At least there are people here to be kind to her.'

'Everyone wanted to be kind to her at first. They all sympathised with her, and simply execrated Clodia.'

'They would!' I said. 'There's no mercy for the strong. Well, aren't they kind to Miss Kane still?'

'To say the truth, people are getting a little bored with her. She doesn't even seem broken-hearted, she's just dull; never minds whether they come to see her or not, and only half listens when they try to talk.'

'You're too kind to be bored.'

'I think I'm a little exasperated,' Sophia admitted with a flash of temper. 'I went to see her yesterday. She hardly ever goes out herself, not even in the garden, and she never puts flowers about the house, and the drawing-room was untidy, and so was she, down at heel and her stockings had black on the ankles. I'm dreadfully sorry for her, but there's no need to be squalid. Oh dear!' she broke off, 'd'you remember how nice she looked at that party, and how happy she and Clodia were together?'

Sophia continued to shake her head over the whole business, but evidently what troubled her most was the defection of the splendid Miss Minstrell.

'It makes you feel we've all got a breaking-point, even the people who seem strongest.'

'If you'd seen all I have,' I said, 'you wouldn't wonder at people having breaking-points. You'd only be surprised at what they can endure before getting to them.'

Sophia was not interested in the endurance of people she didn't know. I tried another tack and pointed out that poor little Miss Kane, at least, could hardly be said to have had a breaking-point, as she was quite prepared to die for her friend.

'But just look at her now!' said Sophia. 'Some people aren't strong enough even to have a breaking-point. It's what I said before, they just crumble.'

And, after that, as sometimes happens with the remarks of very simple people, there seemed no more to be said.

A TALE OF MY GREAT-GRANDFATHER.

It must be pleasant, if you come of an English stock, that has been respectable, but need not have been distinguished, to trace your pedigree. Parish registers, Court rolls, old deeds, the wills at Somerset House, these are agreeable places for research. 'Sir,' said Johnson, of the making of a dictionary, 'I like that muddling work.' And I could say the same of seeking out ancestors.

But in the island of Skye there were no parish registers until 1825, Court rolls were as scarce as in Otaheite, and my forefathers had nothing to convey by deed, or worth leaving by will. Nothing can help me further back than to the sixth generation, and that not by very certain assurance.

I am sorry for this for another reason. I should like to know if I have a direct ancestor who was out in the '45. I should like still more to know if I can claim any kinship with John MacKinnon, who helped the Young Pretender in his wanderings in Skye, and conveyed him to the mainland on July 5, 1746; if I can, I trust he did not stir in his grave at my writing 'The Young Pretender.' I should also like to trace my connexion with Mr. MacKinnon, who was host to Johnson and Boswell at his farm, Corrichatachin, from 6 to 8 September, 1773. 'From Armidel,' says Johnson in his *Journey*, 'we came at night to *Coriatachan*. . . . It is the residence of Mr. *Mackinnon*, by whom we were treated with very liberal hospitality, among a more numerous and elegant company than it could have been supposed easy to collect.' It was in this house that, as Boswell records in the *Tour*, Johnson, being fatigued with his journey, retired early to his chamber, and composed that elegant Sapphic ode—*Permeo terras, ubi nuda rupes*, etc.—which he sent to Mrs. Thrale. Johnson and Boswell came again, and stayed at the same farm from 25 to 28 September. It was on the first evening of this visit that Boswell got drunk on punch, and next day, as a means of reconciliation to the offended Johnson, found a text in 'Mrs. M'Kinnon's Prayer-book,' which 'some would have taken as a divine interposition.'

Duncan MacKinnon, of the parish of Strath in Skye, went to Arran. He, and his son, and grandson (both named John, and the second for distinction called John Og), leased the lands of

Corriechrevie in Arran from the Dukes of Hamilton. John Og married Catalina Camp, their son Alexander, born about 1760, was my great-grandfather, whose tale I recover from his own writings.

According to his own account he was educated at Glasgow, and was a pupil of Dr. Adam Smith. I cannot find his name as a member of the University, but it is clear from his writing that he had a tolerable education. In 1780 he went to Leghorn, and from then to 1786 was 'in the counting-house of Mr. William Orr, a respectable English merchant of the place.' In 1786 he returned to London, with the hope of getting a post in the Navy Office. But this fell through, and in 1787 he joined Messrs. Cutler and Heigelin at Naples. In 1792 he set up for himself in Naples in partnership with Mr. Alexander Macaulay, 'who had formerly been chaplain to a regiment in Holland, but was understood to have acquired money through some contracts in India.'

The business so established—that of merchants and bankers—prospered until disaster overtook the senior partner, MacKinnon. On 5 February, 1795, by virtue of a 'Royal Dispaccio,' he was 'arrested in his own house, and confined there under the guard of four sbirri, a class of the lowest officers of justice in Italy.' And on 5 May, 1795, he was imprisoned in the Castel del Ovo, where he remained for nearly three years.

The reasons for this action by the government of the Two Sicilies are obscure. The victim attributes them to the machinations of various business rivals, and in particular to the personal hostility of the British Minister, Sir William Hamilton. Sir William seems to have intimated to him that his arrest was with his own approval, if not at his own instance, and to have hinted at some charge by the British authorities of trading with the enemy. The scandalous *Memoirs of Lady Hamilton* (2nd ed., 1815, at p. 128) asserts that his fate was due to the enmity of Lady Hamilton, because he had refused to lend her sufficient money for her extravagant desires. But it is the story of his imprisonment and ultimate escape that alone is of any interest now. I take this from his own account, though I curtail his verbosity and omit some moral reflections.

The Castel del Ovo, he writes, is a fortress and a state prison at Naples. It is built upon a rock which stands in the open sea, about four or five hundred yards from the shore, exposed to all the severities of the weather, and is often fatal to its miserable

inhabitants. I was lodged in a small dirty room, *sul astrico*, or garrets, of the castle, under a flat broken roof, affording little protection from the rain. The walls of this room were partly covered with moss, and partly pitched; but these were insecure from the damp; they admitted the wind through the holes that served for windows, and numerous other crevices. The room swarmed with a variety of noxious and disgusting vermin natural to that climate. In this miserable apartment I was immured as a prisoner for three years, without having been once interrogated upon the subject of the accusation, although in that time I addressed forty-four petitions to His Sicilian Majesty, imploring to be heard, and tried by the laws of Naples, or to be sent to England for trial by the laws of my own country.

My wife, young, delicate, and acutely affected by these complicated misfortunes and accumulating oppressions, shared voluntarily with me the inconvenience and horrors of a state prison amongst criminals: our child, then only about 18 months old, shared the same unwholesome atmosphere. In July, 1795, being then far advanced in pregnancy, she was under the necessity of leaving me, and returning with our young child to my desolate house, and lying-in there, without the comfort of my attentions, or that of any female friend, under circumstances which rendered her situation truly distressing and solitary. However, after her being brought-to-bed, it was contrived by secret means to accomplish my going out two evenings, and seeing her and our child. But this momentary alleviation of our misery, though conducted with the utmost secrecy and discretion, reached the knowledge of Sir William Hamilton: the result was an increased rigour in my confinement, to the extent of not allowing me to speak with, or write to, any person, and of having me inspected every two hours by the captain upon guard.

In June, 1796, I devised means to send my wife and children home to Great Britain; nor was it a small part of the inducement to adopt this measure, that I hoped, from her personal exertions, assisted by my connexions, when she should arrive in London, to accelerate either my liberation or my trial. After her departure I became reduced to the extremities of want. I subsisted on half a pint of milk and water and a penny roll for twenty-four hours during forty-seven days; and after that, to the day on which I made my escape, that is, from June, 1796, to the 22nd of March, 1798, my support depended on the benevolent supply of food and

raiment from some Neapolitan families, and on the loan of very small sums from persons who had formerly been my dependents.

Several weeks after the departure of my family for England, a *lazzarone* came into the castle to me, about three o'clock in the afternoon, with two *giarre*, or leaden vessels, containing iced fruit, as a present, he said, from a friend of mine. On asking him the name, he could not tell me; but he gave me a description of his person, which left me in perfect ignorance. As I expected no evil, I was not very precise. I had dined a little before on my scanty pittance, I had therefore less relish for ices, but, as the man wanted his vessels, I emptied their contents into a small bason, and he then went away. About an hour afterwards one of the officers on guard came to see me: I mentioned the circumstances to him, and requested he would partake of the bounty of my unknown friend; I observed instantly a particular gesticulation of great surprise and doubt in his countenance, by which a Neapolitan can convey sometimes more than language can express. He then asked me if I recollected the story of the chocolate, in an opera *buffa* at Naples, in which it is represented that the wife intended to poison her husband. He likewise reminded me, that Prince Carmanico had recently before been poisoned in a cup of chocolate. The officer protested he was afraid the same trick might be intended in these mysterious ices, and as he was resolved not to taste of them, he advised me also to refrain. I took his advice, and we both agreed to try an experiment with them upon some animal. I had neither dog or cat in my power, therefore I resolved to leave them on a plate during the night, to try if the mice, with which my room swarmed, would partake of them. On the morning after, I observed, to my astonishment and horror, five dead mice about the floor, swelled up, with foam at their mouths. Scarcely any doubt remained on my mind that the ices contained a mixture of poison. Who sent me this apparently mortal dose, I am not able to conjecture; I wish, however, to state my opinion decidedly and distinctly, that Sir William Hamilton had neither knowledge or part in this abominable attempt; for though I knew him to be a weak, superannuated man, and considered to have been under the influence of others, I never thought him to possess any *active* depravity of heart—he was most to blame for his *passive* conduct.

From this time forward the utmost precaution became necessary. I gave charge to my faithful servant Bernard, about the manner of buying bread and milk for me; he went to distant parts

of the town, and seldom took any provisions in any fixed place, or near the castle.

Bernard was a Piedmontese invalid soldier, whom I had engaged to serve me in the castle, and to buy my provisions and cook for me. He had a pension of 6 ducats a month for his very long services in the King of Naples' army. I paid him a piece of 12 *carlins*, about 4s. a month, for his wages. He was about seventy-six years of age, strong in mind and body, steady and true to his trust; he had given me frequent proofs of his fidelity and attachment, and I made him the sole agent and confidant in the project of making my escape. He had bought a large hurdle-basket for me, which had served for a long time as my wardrobe. Having found this basket could hold my body, contracted together in the most compact manner, I desired Bernard, on the evening of the 21st March, 1798, to hire a room in the least frequented house he could find near the outward gate of the castle, and to get one of the stoutest *lazzaroni* porters he could find, and to conduct him into the castle to me, which he executed with celerity and judgment. I questioned the porter respecting the weight he was able to carry on his head; he answered, that he had frequently carried a *cantaro* with ease (196 lbs. English); this was considerably more than my weight. I told him to return at six o'clock the next morning, when I should give him a job, without explaining the nature of it. He came accordingly to a minute. My faithful Bernard, already instructed how to manage his part, set off to the outer gate, where he was to await the exit of the load in the basket, and to conduct the *lazzarone* to the room prepared for my reception. I weighed every possible difficulty, and endeavoured to be properly prepared for each. Considering the superstition of the low people in that country, and apprehending that some involuntary movement of mine might discover to the porter that he had a living creature on his head, and in his surprise and fright he might have thrown the basket on the way and run from it; I told him the load he was to carry was a young girl who had been with me, and could not go out of the castle on foot, without running the risk of incurring serious censure and shame: I asked him if he would undertake to carry her out in that basket, properly covered and secured from sight? Having consented, I asked him how much he required for his trouble, warning him, at the same time, that if he suffered the object in the basket to be discovered, he would certainly be imprisoned and punished by the Government for the deed. Having given me

assurances of his courage and resolution, he appealed to me if twelve *carlins* was too much. I agreed to his demand, and desired him to retire to the corridor adjoining, till I put the girl in the basket, and fixed everything properly for him on a table in the room : I should whistle at the moment he was to come in, and go myself out at the other door, that there should be no witness to appear against him in the event of accidents, which, however, I did not see likely to happen. I had got a piece of thin canvas placed all round in the basket, affording a complete covering, and sufficient benefit of air, and a view of the objects before us. I placed myself in the basket, and had a thin mattress so conveniently placed over me, with a small cord and running hitch, as to enable me when down on my side to draw the whole close over me. The signal having been given, my porter instantly entered, and without further ceremony put his head under the basket, raised himself upright with ease, and went out of the room. Like a true *lazzarone*, he was bare-footed, which made his steps the more sure. Having placed his jacket on his shoulder, he went on boldly down the easy descent leading towards the first gate, where he had to pass two sentinels. The whole guard, under the gateway, was turning out to receive the new guard in about a quarter of an hour, and before which I was to have mustered, as usual, *in company with the galley slaves*, therefore there was no time to spare. While my bearer was running the gauntlet through all these soldiers, a serjeant was bestowing the heavy weight of his rod upon a disorderly soldier ; this, I believe, had attracted the attention of the others, and one of them jolted so heavily against my basket, that my man staggered, and slipped so severely as to be nearly put out of his balance. His jacket dropped on the ground, but a soldier gave it to him. My trepidations were more than I can describe ; I felt as if the hair of my head had raised erect. I shuddered, and the drops of perspiration fell from me as large as peas. . . .

It was common to see baskets of the same construction going in and out of the castle with linen, without search or molestation, and it was from this that the idea had struck me as a feasible means of accomplishing my purpose. Thus we passed through the guard, and the first double sentinels, perfectly well : the same good fortune attended us in passing the first drawbridge, and in going along the narrow isthmus leading from the castle to *terra firma*. It rained a little, and blew very hard, therefore we met with very few people on the way—for I could see a little through the thin canvas and the

basket. When we approached within about twenty yards of the last bridge, the violence of the wind broke my small cord, and off flew the thin mattress. The canvas, however, and a loose great-coat, covered me still completely, and the closeness with which I was fixed in the basket kept them down. My *lazzarone* did not stop till he placed me on the ledge of the bridge, only about fourteen inches broad, as I had afterwards ascertained. He left me there, and ran for the mattress; the wind blew so hard that my basket and myself were menaced to be either blown back upon the road and there exposed, or to be dashed to pieces on the rocks below. My *lazzarone*, knowing the nature of his charge, was much affected and I could feel that his limbs trembled under him. He was back in a few seconds, and with his sash tied the mattress on me again. There was a difficulty in getting the basket on his head, and he called to a corporal, then coming towards us, to help the basket on. This man asked what the devil was in it? The acute *lazzarone* instantly replied—the dinner utensils and bedding of an officer; by saying an officer, the corporal's curiosity was set at rest. While I rested on that dangerous parapet, Bernard waited at the outside of the gate, and viewed my perilous situation with emotions of despair; but no sooner was the basket fairly replaced on the porter's head, than he went on at some distance before the porter, to show him the room where the supposed girl was to be left.

As soon as the porter had placed the basket on a table in the room, Bernard paid him the twelve *carlin* piece agreed upon, and dismissed him. I was pulled out of the basket, benumbed by the contracted position in which I had remained. We heard the new guard with drum and fifes going toward the castle: I recommended to Bernard, for his own safety, to go and endeavour to get in with the guard, or before it, and in passing to speak to some of his old comrades of the serjeants and corporals, and to let himself be noticed by the officer as he passed them. He was to commence immediately to boil my milk and bread, which had always been my breakfast. I put on the loose great-coat I had brought with me, and a military hat with a red Neapolitan cockade: taking my old and faithful friend Bernard in my arms I [said farewell to him]. We instantly separated, and I went through several of the less frequented streets till I came to the Mole, where the shipping lay. A young lad in a boat put up his finger, a mode sometimes used by these *barcaroli*, to ask if one wants a boat: I nodded assent, and stepped on board, having kept my sleeve up to my mouth from the moment I left the

room, as if to screen my mouth from the cold wind. There were but two alternatives for me, either to go on board of an English privateer, or a French merchant vessel, being the only two of free colours enjoying the privileges of exemption from search, and of visits from the custom-house. The English privateer was manned by Slavonians, Spaniards, Genoese, and even a few Moors, and was of course subject to any commands the British Envoy and Pro-Consul might give. By venturing on board of a French merchant vessel, I had only to expose myself to the enemies of my country, who, I hoped, could not exceed the limits of the laws of nations. Under these considerations, I directed the youth alongside of the French brig called *Le Bernard Bienfaisant*—the very name and quality of my faithful servant. She was loaded with staves and hoops, and ready to sail for Agde, in Provence; and I formed a hope, that in the course of the voyage she might touch at Leghorn or Genoa. The Captain had gone ashore, and I instantly sat down in the miserable cabin, and wrote the following letter to the French Minister.

[The letter is lengthy. It sets forth his misfortunes, and his escape. The most material passage is the following: 'Je vous demande respectueusement. . . nom de l'humanité de ne pas me remettre sous la puissance de mes ennemis, et d'ordonner au Capitaine (qui est le porteur de la présente) de ne point permettre aucune violence contre moi.']

I was informed afterwards, that the confusion and alarm in the castle was considerable. Honest Bernard had strictly followed the lesson I gave him, which, with his own natural sagacity, served to lessen every suspicion of his co-operation in my escape. The poor old man suffered, notwithstanding, a confinement in the military *carabozzo* for seventeen days, but it was to no purpose; he had too much the character of a soldier, and of an honest man, to be intimidated by any punishment they could inflict. . . .

The French Minister did not answer my letter, but I was informed that he had given instructions to Captain Negre to protect his flag from insults, and the unfortunate person on board of his ship from violence. . . . My situation on board of this miserable vessel was far from being easy, comfortable, or free. The crew, with the exception of the two Captains and two mariners, consisted of violent and unprincipled Jacobins, who held even the name of Englishman in detestation. I passed myself with them for a Swiss; and, for want of a safe conveyance to take me away, I continued on

board of this and another vessel in the port of Naples about four months. . . .

A French *avisó*, going from Toulon to Egypt with dispatches, was captured by an English frigate, in July, 1798, off the island of Marittimo, and the crew were delivered up at Naples to the French Consul, against a receipt. I had sent to me from Switzerland seventy-five ducats (about twelve guineas), from a brave Swiss officer, whose humanity had subjected him to about eleven months of unjust imprisonment in the same castle with myself, but had been for several months before set at liberty. Some other friends added a little more to this sum, out of which I gave eighty ducats towards purchasing a boat, in which the Captain of these released French prisoners-of-war joined me; but as they could not get regular papers made out in order to navigate the boat, we set off one night about the middle of July, and in about a day and a half arrived off Monte Circello, at the beginning of the Roman Paludi Pontini, a pestiferous morass, about eighty miles in extent, where even the birds cannot live in summer and autumn: bad weather and contrary winds obliged us to land near that place. I had previously provided myself with a bottle of strong vinegar, camphor in spirits of wine, and strong aromatics, and a piece of woollen cloth with which I rubbed these liquids on my face and neck: I had some camphor in my mouth, and in a cloth round my breast; and I ate biscuit and garlic. Thus furnished I travelled forward on the sea sand towards Capo d'Anza, a port to the eastward of the Tiber. I slept the first night very soundly under a bush, my head having been wrapt in the woollen cloth wetted by the vinegar; and before my arrival at the port, the boat took me on board again, and near sunset on the second day we arrived in the harbour. For want of a bill of health, or other regular papers, we were laid under quarantine, and not suffered to go on shore.

While we were at the Health-office, a boat under Neapolitan colours came in, manned with part of the Slavonians belonging to the English privateer we had left at Naples. One of these Greeks, who seemed to be possessed of good principles, found a convenient opportunity to inform one of our men, that they were come in pursuit of us. Our pursuers had regular papers, and many of their men went on shore for the night, under an idea, which we got promulgated, that we would stay for two days until we got regular papers. At eleven o'clock at night, however, we departed. Porto d'Anza opens towards the south-east, and is covered by the

cape, which extends a considerable way into the sea in that direction. We had scarcely doubled this promontory when the wind began to blow fresh from the south-east, perfectly fair for our course to Civita Vecchia, while it prevented our pursuers from coming out during the three days this gale lasted. We arrived at Civita Vecchia that evening, and in a few days we procured regular papers. I had letters to a Swiss officer, and to another gentleman there, who obtained a Swiss passport for me, still in my possession, under the name of *John Julien Reitz*. Our pursuers arrived, and by cautious management I got a fair interview with the conscientious Greek: he explained to me that the boat in which he was had been sent after us, with orders to take a person who was on board back to Naples, or to secure him at any hazard, dead or alive! I communicated the circumstances to the Swiss officer, and to the patron of our boat. It was by me considered necessary to limit the knowledge of it to them, as Civita Vecchia was then garrisoned by French soldiers; and I apprehended, if a discovery took place, I might be detained as an English prisoner, or probably treated as a spy; for measures of terror then governed the French. We contrived, by effectual measures with the Health-office, to detain the Neapolitan boat, under other pretexts, for two days after our departure. On the night of our departure, and about two miles west of Civita Vecchia, several muskets were fired at us from the shore; the balls struck the water around our boat, but by making more offing we got out of reach of our assailants. On the second day the wind blew fresh from the westward, which obliged us to put ashore on the Tuscan Maremma, or marsh, where I landed, and travelled through that bad air to Leghorn.

At Leghorn I was made welcome amongst my good friends, who rejoiced at my liberation from a state of cruel bondage. Their hospitality and humane care made me as happy as possible for a mind oppressed, and a body overwhelmed with fatigue and sickness, as mine was. . . . Every precaution that could be devised to prevent a putrid fever, was administered, during a stay of about twelve days at Leghorn. I recovered wonderfully; and having received from my friends there, a supply of money and clothing, I took the necessary measures to go off for Genoa, on board the passage-boat of Padron Barrachino. Just as I was about to go on board in the Mole, the same Greek with whom I had had the recited colloquy at Civita Vecchia, accosted me again here. He told me that his boat had arrived about ten days, and they knew I was to

go in Barrachino's boat : he advised me to go by land ; I informed him that I should, though I had instantly determined otherwise. I then ordered my trunk out of Barrachino's boat, paid him his full demand for my passage, and, by a manœuvre, I got my papers renewed, and, entirely unknown to my pursuers, I went on board of another *felucca*. That very night, my pursuers overtook and boarded Barrachino's boat, off Lerici, in the gulf of Spezia, assassinated two men, took away several packages and trunks, and set off to the south-east. . . . My *felucca*, the property of old Padron Tarabotto, and commanded by his nephew, arrived in safety at Genoa, where this catastrophe made a considerable noise ; but the general conjecture was, that the assailants were Greek pirates.

Being arrived at Genoa in safety, I had no further grounds to apprehend the effects of any persecution from Naples. I travelled, chiefly on foot, towards Milan, and into Switzerland ; and in the course of this and the remainder of my journey, I had to overcome many serious and difficult incidents, arising chiefly from the state of the countries through which I passed, under the vigilance and rigour of the French armies. To be master of the languages is indispensably necessary on such occasions. I staid in the Pays de Vaud about three months, enjoying the kindest hospitality from numerous friends, and waiting for a passport from the Swiss Government, which I obtained with considerable difficulty. It was late in November before I arrived at Bâle, where I embarked in a small open boat, built of three boards. Economy, and the equal rigour of the Austrian troops on the right, and the French on the left, bank of the Rhine, rendered this mode the most advisable. I continued for five days, going down the river to the neighbourhood of Manheim, always exposed to incessant rain and snow, which, with my sufferings in the castle, and travelling through the Pontine marshes, affected my health so seriously, that I despair of ever recovering it. Near Manheim I landed, and went to Frankfort, the first place where I thought myself in safety, to write to His Majesty's Secretary of State. I arrived at Hamburgh about the beginning of January, 1799, and there I wrote a letter to Sir James Craufurd, the British Envoy, and presented myself as a state prisoner to be sent to England, in order to stand my trial for the accusations of Sir William Hamilton ; but he declined to accept of my surrender, or to furnish me with money in my distress. I went from Hamburgh to Cuxhaven, where eight packets were shut up in the ice till the beginning of March ; and

it was on the 8th day of that month that I arrived in London, being only fourteen days short of a year since I made my escape from the castle of vengeance at Naples.

— Cet affreux château,
Palais de la vengeance,
Qui renferme souvent
Le crime et l'innocence.

On my arrival in London, I again made offer of surrender to His Majesty's Secretary of State, who also refused to accept of it, '*because there was no accusation against me.*'

So ends the tale of my great-grandfather. In London he made great efforts to get redress, sending a printed letter to each member of the House of Commons in February, 1802, and presenting an elaborate Petition to the Privy Council in 1805. It is from the latter, and its lengthy appendix, that I have taken the foregoing narrative. I have no doubt he was that typical nuisance to officials—a man with a grievance: and unfortunately he was a man with a real grievance. For he had been ruined by an imprisonment of three years, without being tried by any sort of Court.

He was subsequently one of the first British settlers in Argentina. He died at Buenos Ayres on 17 November, 1815.

F. D. MACKINNON.

SINGPHO INTO AGHA.

A STORY OF THE LEGIONS.

BY LIEUT.-GENERAL SIR GEORGE MACMUNN, K.C.B.,
K.C.S.I., D.S.O.

I.

THIS is a story of the British Empire and the World War, and the far-flung battle-line, in which the British brought their fighting men from the uttermost ends of the earth, even as did the Romans, when Dacian and Berber and Syrian and Persian served at Cæreleon and fathered British brats; and because it deals with folk and facts, some details have been slightly veiled.

Away up among the jungles under the high hills which separate British Burma and Upper Burma at that, from China 'crost the bay,' a Kachin lad, of the Lissaw tribe, sat lazily chasing the birds from the village *taungya*,¹ and now and again firing a matchlock, lest the barking deer nibble the tops from his mother's buck-wheat.

Pantaw-gam was the only son of a dispossessed *Tsawbwa* or tribal chief of a tribe in which the republican virus had spread, and now he lived in his mother's hut, from which the great horns had been torn down, as an extinct sign of kingly power. And young Pantaw-gam thought sadly of the downfall of his family, of which the old slave-woman Hee-Tee had spoken, she who had come from far-away west over the hills to India and knew a great deal. She it was who told him more than his pretty Shan-Talok mother, with the dozens of silver bangles and rings on her toes, had done, who now thought more of her opium pipe than the lost family heritage.

But Hee-Tee would squat like a chimpanzee and not like an orang, as the rest of the village did, for she was Aryan and not Mongoloid, and told of his family and his father, to whom she had been slave-wife and cuddler, and how the tribe had envied his strength and wealth and listened to the talk of the Yaw-yins, and had grown envious of his wealth and his heads and his slaves, and one day had killed him and stripped the big hut. . . . But Pan-

¹ Clearing in the jungle.

taw-gam must win it back and there was but one way: he must get *naukri*, service with the *Thakins*—but she, being of Ind, called them *Sahibs*—and perhaps be a soldier, and then the *Nats*, the spirits whom the village worshipped and especially those to whom his fathers sacrificed, would perhaps make him a great man once again.

And the boy would listen long and often to tales of the Indian side of the hills and the *Sahibs*' mighty ways in organisation and road-making and everything else. Much rice must he eat and many fowls, and grow big and strong and be the sort of man the *Nats* loved.

And it was so. Hee-Tee, whose real name, which she had long forgotten, was Ama-Jan, saw to it, and now little Pantaw-gam was big Pantaw-gam, and stronger than all the village lads and would soon be ready to talk to the maids in the long hut, and every day Ma-Toi, his mother, just smoked and smiled. But Hee-Tee saw to it that he learnt all that good Kachin boys should learn, which was not much, for the Kachins have no written language and no revealed religion, being in fact in a religious state that is or should be invaluable to students of evolution. To them all religious life is centred in veneration for '*Nats*,' spirits who may be good or evil, but who must be propitiated.

But there is a place set apart in every village where offerings to the *Nats* of rice and eggs are made, and which it is believed the *Nats* will visit in person. So Pantaw-gam learnt to take bundles of rice wrapped in plantain leaves, and eggs to the Place-of-*Nats*, and to learn that unless he was a good little boy and did as he was told the bad *Nat* would come for him in the night. But if he was a good little boy, and did not shoo his mother's fowls, the *Nats* would help him to be a great man one of these fine days.

And then one day the *Nats* seemed more than amiable, for to Ama-Jan's excitement, two *Thakins*¹ arrived and with them a party of police, military police . . . which is only another word for soldiers. The *Thakins* had come to find out who had robbed a jade convoy proceeding to China from Mogaung by the Upper Road. Someone with a pretty taste in mutton-fat jade had stopped the caravan of Panthay mules and opened all the jade-parcels and the contractor complained that the very best pieces only had been taken. And anyone who knows about the jade trade knows that to rob mutton-fat jade, good or bad, is one of

¹ *Sahibs*, i.e. British officers.

the things that opens heaven and earth, and only very stalwart rogues dare do it. Some said it was the black-flags from Kumpi-Pum, the other side of the Chinese border, who had done it, and the Chinese official at the sessions town of Sansi, a barbarian of the Third Class of the Order of the Peacock, had sent in his large red visiting-card with black characters thereon and wanted to know in diplomatic language what the blanketty blank it was all about, and that if the British could not manage their Kachins it was high time they gave up trying and let men who could do it take on the job, or words to that effect, as they say in the army.

However, that does not matter one twopenny Chinese cash, so far as this story goes, except as has been said that it set Ama-Jan's dream coming true, for here actually within reach were soldiers, real soldiers in khaki, such as she had seen as a child in Darjeeling, and two, actually two, *Sahibs* with them, just when the village had had the cheek to tell her they 'did believe there were no such things.'

So Hee-Tee, who was really Ama-Jan, and Pantaw-gam's mother each took their longest cheroot from the slit in their ears and lit them and taking Pantaw-gam, now a well-grown lad, went down to join the throng that was squatting outside the officers' tents, and to their great delight saw them washing their heads and shoulders over a bucket and saw, as Ama-Jan had always maintained, that they really were pink and apparently pink all over.

Outside the tents was a khaki military policeman, who walked up and down and pushed the crowd when it gaped too closely, and frightened Hee-Tee a good deal, till she discovered that he was only Shwe-Ma's nephew for all his swagger. After which she was able to talk freely. The Kachin policeman was affable enough and ready to converse.

'How did you become like this?' demanded Hee-Tee, who was Ama-Jan.

'I went down to Waimaung and I heard that a *Thakin* was taking boys to be policemen. Everyone said "it is no good a Kachin like you trying, so don't you flatter yourself." So I saw the *Thakin* standing by his tent and I *shiko'd*. He caught me by the arm and bent it, and laughed "Ho! ho!" A headman came up and told me that he wanted me as a policeman and I went.'

'Would Pantaw-gam there be any good?'

The Kachin thought he was just the sort. 'I will ask the *Thakin*.'

And so they sat and waited, and watched from afar off and puffed big cigars.

And presently the *Thakin* came out of his tent buckling on a belt with a revolver holster. A party of the police were falling in and having their arms inspected, and Pantaw-gam was watching in rapt wonder. The Kachin orderly said a word and pointed to the woman. The *Thakin* spoke to her in Kachin, but she answered using the Indian word *Huzoor*. Then he spoke in Hindustani and her heart leapt as she answered.

'I am a slave here for twenty years,' she said. 'Slave to the old *Tsawbwa*. Happy and content, oh yes! But it is this boy, see. The old *Tsawbwa*'s son. Oh, *Huzoor*, I want him to be a *boh*¹ too, and these jungly folk know nothing. I have been his nurse ever since he was a year old. Take him and make a *boh* of him.'

And the *Thakin* laughed and patted her arm.

The boy was still watching the men now standing formally at ease. They had already built themselves a row of little shelters of split bamboo, and two were making a table for the *Thakin*. You need neither shelter nor furniture in the jungles if a Kachin with his *dah* and a bamboo clump are handy. A cannon was once made of bamboo with bamboo shells . . . but that belongs to another yarn. A Kachin with his *dah* can do anything that lies between felling a tree and taking a thorn from your foot. Carried in a sling over their shoulders in a bamboo sheath, what a *kukri* is to a Gurkha, that is his *dah* to a Kachin, only more so. It takes a head off a goat and an acorn off a tree with equal precision.

But it was not the clever carpentering that fascinated the lad, he could do that too, but the drill, the precision with which the little men stamped their feet and moved their rifles—something better than the *marshibo* gun, a matchlock of gas-piping, or the old Tower musket that still held the field as the village fire-arm. Only the headmen had Mannlichers and the like, the discarded weapons of Europe that are traded round the world, chiefly to the ultimate annoyance of the British who police the world. 'Shun!—Slope!—Ri-tun!—Ferunt!' What sesame was this. Pantaw-gam's eyes were like saucers, and the *Thakin* came over with the foster-mother. He patted the lad on the shoulder, and he sprang up frightened and then also *shiko*'d.

¹ *boh*=chief.

'Will you come with me and be a soldier?' And the boy's eyes opened like great saucers again.

It did not take long to arrange. Pantaw-gam's mother was tearful enough, but soon realised, as Hee-Tee pointed out, that for the widow of a deposed *Tsawbwa* who did not even get a fair share of the *Nats'* gifts, she would do well to have a friend at court, and so Pantaw-gam became one of the legion.

For two more days the party remained at the village, making long visitations and putting up a scrap with some Chinese outlaws from over the border, and getting no doubt some information regarding the jade-raiders, and then away they marched. But Pantaw-gam's mother returned to her opium-pipe, and little foster-mother Hee-Tee, that was Ama-Jan of Ind, wept her little shrivelled eyelids out, but with joy and exultation in her heart. Also the *Thakin* had said that if ever she wanted a friend she could come to him. And the great bamboos waved overhead as the party of military police marched down past the long log huts and past the *Nats'* houses and down the great high road, which was but a mule-track, till far away the silver streak that was the Irrawaddy grew nearer and wider, and bamboo partridges called and jungle fowl burst out from the undergrowth. Excited young Pantaw-gam, who had a magnificent embroidered Kachin haversack trimmed with cowries, that Hee-Tee had been working for him for years, ran happily along beside the rear files of the party, and heaven of heavens, found himself on a steam launch that was to take him to the metropolis of Mitkhyina, the Village-of-Big-Fish. And very big fish they seemed to the lad who, though barely sixteen, found himself forthwith initiated into the age-old mystery of the goose-step.

The battalion that he was to join was partly Gurkha and Assamese and partly Kachin, Mongoloid races all, with a desire to drill themselves at British drill as representing the best fun they knew. Far into the night the little men would drill each other till now and again a *Sahib* would come out and say it was time to go to bed and take life more seriously. For a military police battalion is a very fine thing indeed, with a kernel of the ways of the Line. The experiment of making military policemen from the Kachins was doing very well; the little men affected the Gurkha Kilmarnock cap as the Red Karens had done years before, and had displayed an unexpected aptitude for discipline. Signalling too appealed to them, and minds absolutely unlettered still seemed to grasp the

principles of the heliograph, the servant of Ra, the Sun-god of the world. And before long Pantaw-gam became not only an efficient policeman but was actually attracting notice from his superiors as a very promising lad.

II.

And then perhaps a year had rolled by and the Great War lit up the horizon. That did not matter much on the upper waters of the Irrawaddy, but now and again a *Thakin* slipped away and said he was off to the War, and it was said that the British and Indian soldiers at Mandalay and Maymyo were going. Then after a while a *Thakin* came with one arm who had lost it in a great battle which the Kachins could hardly pronounce, and there was much talk of it, and their little minds now for the first time grasped what it meant. And some of the smarter N.C.O.'s began to ask if they too could not go, and talked valiantly of braving all the perils of the unknown sea.

Then one day came news, the *Sirkar*, as they had learnt to call it from the Gurkhas, was raising more and more soldiers. A battalion or two were to be raised in Burma. Burmans were to serve . . . the Kachins sniffed. . . . Chins were going to France as Labour Corps . . . the Kachins' eyes became more and more like saucers. Then, finally, Kachins were to be enlisted in the Burma Rifles. Pantaw-gam and a dozen lads went wild with excitement. They were to go out and see the great world of which stories had been so much told. And very soon the *Thakins* came to go through the policemen who were willing to go, and all the Kachins volunteered, so that ere long they found themselves going off, fifty at a time, to join the battalion raising. Pantaw-gam had learnt to use the flag and had tried with a helio and found himself pushed into the signal section, to his delight. For somehow these little Kachins with no written language and no revealed religion nevertheless had hands that answered the call of brains pretty directly. Aye, and it was soon evident to the officers from Gurkha regiments, who were put to train and raise them, that they were very smart soldiers indeed and worth a dozen of the loblolly Burman recruits who grinned and smoked all day but came all of a twitter when there was a job of work. So much so that more than half of the battalion were Kachins before they had been long up at Maymyo.

And the Kachins had not been unmindful of the *Nat* house,

and the clever *dahs* and cleverer fingers had slit up and plaited the rice cups and the egg platters. But as yet no *Nats* had come into session. That all were agreed on. For *Nats* are like cats, fond of the house and do not take readily to a new habitation. But Pantaw-gam was not so sure, for at night he would go to the *Nat* house and listen and wonder, and now and again the wind would sigh and sigh through the feathery bamboos, and they seemed to say the Kachin equivalent to Bow Bells: 'Go along, Pantaw-gam, thrice *Tsawbwa* of Namli.' And so when it was said that the *Nats* had not come yet he would fain say they had, yet thought better of it and went on with the helio and the dummy board, so that he could read and send better than most, and was put on to the buzzer.

But though regiments are usually allowed years to come to fighting pitch, an Empire's needs know no law, and the half-trained Burma Rifles found themselves moving down to Mandalay away from their hills and down to great Rangoon where the world's shipping seems to lie, and were piled high into a British-India transport which slipped out of port past high-pooed carven river-vessels and Burman oarsmen, passed golden pagodas and tinkly temple bells, down to the sea they had hardly even heard of. And hundreds of Burman girls in coloured hand wisps and little white jackets and varied skirts laughed and waved and smoked cheroots as big as themselves, for all the world like Lord Lonsdale. The smell of Gna-pi tainted the air for memory, and bands played, and a company of Red Karens presented arms on the quay. La! La! And they were really off to the wars like all the rest of the world, though what war was and why, they did not bother their little Mongoloid heads. The great King had called and the legions had sprung up, and Singpho and Yawyin and Lissaw from the uttermost ends of the Empire were responding to the call.

So they sailed away for a year and a day as the song has it, and found themselves entering the land where the Jumblies lived, by the great *Shatt el Arab*, the river of the Arabs, where perhaps the Mongoloid had their origin, deriving their slanting eyelids from ancestor Cain, who, as some say, was thus distinguished. But the rank and file of the Burma Rifles knew little about that and wondered if they were back in their Irrawaddy once again, for they had seen blue distant hills as they had come up the Gulf. But when for miles it was palm trees rather than teak and bamboo, they were not quite sure, and landed wondering.

But the War, though no one knew it, was drawing to a close, and at any rate the Turks were hard put to it, and like rats in a corner, snarling and biting and desperate, so that half-baked soldiers of unknown fighting powers were best kept out of it. To Qilat-Saleh, the pretty Arab village on the Tigris, the battalion went by steamer. And as the steamers chunked up the narrows and the man in the chains chanted the old cry of the *seraing* . . . 'Sare do bahm'—'Nahin milla—Nahin milla!' it was more like life on the Irrawaddy than ever.

The battalion definitely located for the moment on the L. of C. was sad enough. But the Commanding Officer drowned his chagrin, in drill early, drill late—musketry—field days—route marching, until it was a very smart battalion that had never heard a shot fired in anger which sat by the narrows at Qilat-Saleh. Now Pantaw-gam had already displayed the blood of the *Tsawbwa* breed, had shown he could rule, and had risen to the rank of corporal, which was a big thing in Kachin life. The night before his promotion had appeared in orders the *Nats* had come and his own eggs on the pillar to the right of the Place-of-the-*Nats* had gone. A babu had written for him in English entirely his own to Ama-Jan, and Ama-Jan had travelled far afoot to the nearest post office to have it read to her, and to get the post-office clerk to write a reply. And this is how it ran, for you must remember Ama-Jan spoke in Kachin mixed with some Hindi, and the *babu-ji* had to do it his own way into English.

To Naik Pantaw-Gam of the Burma Rifles in field force at Tigris.
Force D.

'Your letter coming every time. You getting *naik* that very fortunate. I thinking *Nats* doing something big for you, so that you become big *boh* with *Thakins*. Ama-Jan every day placing eggs in that *Nat*-Place. Your mother well and saying come back and someday be *Tsawbwa* of Sadon. I shall ever pray. Poor Hee-Tee. Very lonely never seeing Pantaw-gam.'

When Pantaw-gam got that letter, the first that had come from his distant mountains, he went down to the palm groves, so different from his own bamboos, and stood by the *Nat*-Place that the regiment had made. All the regiment said that the *Nats* had been coming lately and that everything would be well. There was a breeze blowing across the marsh from Babylon and the boats on the other bank at the pretty village of Qilat-Saleh were hoisting their

sails and the Sabeen girls were watching them from the balconies. It was almost like the Irrawaddy if you shut your eyes, especially when an army steamer was coming and the Indian *seraing* would chant out the soundings—'Sare do Bam! Sare do Bam! Eh Bam ek hath!' and the voice changed its cadence so that the *Mahum sahib* on the bridge should know the water was getting shallow. Pantaw-gam could almost imagine he was coming down from Myitkhyna to Bhamo, and the breeze from the palms was in his face. Breezes talk to young men all the world over, sad and remindful of home and friends, soft and talking of girls, the little Shan girls by the rice fields, and clearer of hope and ambitions, and the breezes said to Pantaw-gam, 'Turn again, Pantaw-gam, you shall a *boh* become,' and he went back comforted to see that his helios and lamps were in good order, for was he not a corporal of the signal section?

But it was not a very happy battalion next day when the great news came that the whole Turkish Army at Mosul had surrendered and also that the armistice had been signed, and that this new and remarkable battalion was not to have its baptism of fire and to seek the bubble reputation.

But before long there was much commotion in the camp, for the Commander-in-Chief himself was passing down-stream in his steamer and would inspect the battalion. He came and was graciously pleased, especially when he saw the skilled signallers and learnt that the Kachins were unusually expert. The battalion would have to form part of the garrison he said, but if as he expected there was trouble in the hills, he would give them a run for their money, and left them rejoicing, for he was a man of understanding. He had even patted Pantaw-gam on the back, and to everyone's surprise passed the time of day in Kachin.

But twenty-seven years before that General had found himself, a lad in charge of a small convoy with a dozen Gurkhas, on the road to Sadon which rhymes with atone, in the Kachin Hills far up the Irrawaddy, and fighting for his life through twenty miles of hill and gorge and bamboo jungle. He carried the marks of Kachin musket balls on his body, and he was tickled to death to find himself for the next meeting in command of many of them. 'My Lissaws and Yaw-yins and merry men all shall have a run for their money,' quoth he, and told the Colonel so.

III.

THE SHRILL-VOICED CARDUCHI.

And it was not long before things began to happen. Pan-Turk, Pan-Islam, Pan-Kurd, Pan-Arab and every movement that the good President Wilson had loosed from his Pandora Box began to fall on the land. Far north of Bagdad and a hundred miles inland from the Tigris lie the mountains of southern Kurdistan, and the pleasant valley of Suleimanieh. And in Suleimanieh and the great mountains beyond lived since before the days of Xenophon the shrill-voiced Carduchi, whom the modern world calls Kurds, and who still pitch their voices far and near at will across their valleys. Warlike lawless gentlemen, needing some handling, and in this part owing some allegiance to one Sheikh Mahmud, an *Agha* of one of those families with sufficient hereditary religious prestige to enable them with the aid of cut-throats sundry, to dominate for weal or for woe their neighbours. Suleimanieh was in occupation in some sort, in that a British political officer and several assistants resided there to keep touch with the tribes and especially to see that the tobacco revenue on which the Turks had so relied was not squandered, for Suleimanieh grew a tobacco of more than ordinary merit.

Sheikh Mahmud could not wait the deliberations of the Powers, and suddenly rose in rebellion with the help of some Kurds from across the Persian border. The levies soon joined in and the British political and levy officers were arrested and made prisoner. All the tribes at once rallied to the Sheikh's call. Now Suleimanieh lay far into the mountains, and though a British brigade lay distributed on the road, it was not in any strength within reach. So universal was the rising that several small British parties who endeavoured to stem it were destroyed and convoys captured.

Reinforcements were sent up, but it was over a hundred miles from the rail-head at Baiji on the Tigris, a hundred desert miles in the middle of the hot season. It was some little time therefore before sufficient troops could be collected. Many were war-worn, and the Chief remembered him of his Burmans and Kachins and how they were repining for want of a sniff of villainous saltpetre. The telegraphs ticked out their message, and a great steamer with two barges atow hove in sight at Qilat-Saleh, to embark the eager little men for a two-hundred mile voyage to Kut and thence by rail ninety-six more into Bagdad. And then was seen the weird sight

of Mongolians from the far confines of Burma and the Chinese border, far further than even the land of the Gurkhas, marching through the streets and past the minarets of Bagdad, a sight that had not been seen since the days of Hulagu and his leather-clad Mongols, *en route* to the German terminus of the Bagdad railway and the line northwards to Mosul. While the Burmans chattered and grinned, the five hundred little men of no revealed religion and no written language, marched along more dourly, their long Kachin *dahs* over their shoulders adding an unusual look of fierceness to their outfit. The chief sent a telegram to General Fraser, 'I am sending you the Kachins and I want them used.'

A night's run brought the little men to Baiji, and the march to Kirkuk and General Fraser's point of assembly at Chemchamal took some time. The sand grouse were nesting and the desert alive with parent birds and countless eggs on the *put*, so that Pantaw-gam could offer freely to the *Nats* who, all the battalion now believed, came nightly and expressed high approval.

Time and space had given Sheikh Mahmud opportunity to prepare, and he had staged a time-honoured old battle. The real entrance to the Suleimanieh country lay at the Bazian Pass, where an up-ended set of strata threw an almost vertical wall of rocks with occasional gaps in the surface, and through one of these the cart road wound its way from Chemchamal to Suleimanieh. Here time and again had the Kurds held up a Turkish force that had come to present the revenue bill, which after the custom of the time would be long overdue. The Turkish commander always advanced along the road in column with a band playing, and it was always possible to put up a fight and slither away unscathed.

'Aha!' said the Sheikh, 'these soldiers have only one trick; here comes the British General, just like the Pasha, up along that old cart road, tow de row de row.' And so he and his braves made the Bazian Pass secure after the methods of their fathers.

But the British commander knew a trick worth two of that. He was not going to march solemnly into the jaws of the pass. Not a bit of it. Nevertheless he came up and pitched his bivouac within three or four miles thereof, just to reassure the Kurdish Agha that he meant to play the game in the morning according to the rule. But he said to himself, 'I will make master Sheikh Mahmud smell hell my own way. I will put my faithful Burman Rifles behind him at dawn before he knows that he's awake!' And he did so.

At midnight the Kachin companies paraded, light, *dahs* and all—while the troops in bivouac burned their camp fires merrily.

In the Burma Rifles all had been excitement. To the new corps that is to see its first fight there must be excitement, and here it was to be a glorious open fight with man against man, and not the horror of the barrage and the wire and over the top into the hell of counter-barrage. The Colonel of the 70th was a young man, and to a young man there is no wine like taking your first command into action. To look at the men waiting, and leaning on you, to feel their enthusiasm and to taste their confidence, and the Kachins stood round like terriers, looking at their huntsman, even the loblolly Burmans were keyed up.

Pantaw-gam had been on outpost early in the afternoon before on a detached hill, till relieved before dusk. He had collected a dozen eggs of the sand grouse and had woven a little *cut* atop an aloe bush nearby. Surely the *Nats* would accept his offering and come to his support.

And when the order had come to the picquet to be relieved, in preparation for their early start, he had slipped away into the watercourse to look for them. Joy of joy, the *Nats* had been, the eggs had gone, and surely Hee-Tee's prophecy was to come true, he was to become a *boh*. And little Pantaw-gam packed up his helio and his hand signal-lamp and trudged away to camp in the seventh heaven of content. Happily there was no one to tell him of the Yorkshire keeper's son with a partiality to game-birds' eggs that had been wandering from camp and found the 'danged' queer little nest.

It was a half-past midnight when the Burma Rifles, the Kachins leading, slipped away to the south, led by guides of the Jaf, and a couple of Kurds of the Suleimanieh levies who had escaped from the *coup-d'état*, and arriving a couple of hours later at the foot of the hills three miles from the Bazian Pass, started to scale the rugged scrub-clad cliff. By 9 a.m. the main bivouac was under arms and started direct for the pass, with plenty of noise, even venturing to sound the forbidden bugle. The Kurds soon stood to arms behind their breastworks at the gap which forms the pass, laughing to themselves that all regular soldiers are the same, and come along the main road and then are surprised that they get defeated.

Close by a big block of stone behind the right rear of the gap in the strata which formed the barrier, Sheikh Mahmud himself had

taken up his station to direct the slaughter of the confiding soldiery. At the first flash of the dawn, British guns opened on the face of the rock. That did not have much effect, and the Kurds soon drew heart of grace when they saw how little was the damage. A couple of battalions now extended on the plain, and Sheikh Mahmud scoffed. He would wait till they were a bit nearer, and then he would serve them as twice he had served previous Pashas who had come against him a-revenue-collecting.

But he laughs loudest who laughs last. Just as Sheikh Mahmud thought he would give the advancing troops the pounding he had prepared for, something had happened on his left. Hordes of men were pouring on to his flank from the hill-tops. The scrub and rocks were full of them. Hell! What has happened! Bang! Smither! Smash! Against the stones comes the fire that is enfilading his Kurds. Yells are borne down the morning breeze, fierce little Mongol yells from amid the up-ended strata. The Kurds are running and after them run little men, some firing, some with rifle and bayonet, many, slinging the arms of modernity, are laying about with the long Kachin *dahs* from the jungles of the Eastern Hill. Hell for leather and the devil take the hindmost! Further, the troops advancing from the front are up to the position too and the Kurds, the revolting levies and the Agha's own bodyguard of ruffians are putting up a hurried uncertain fire fight.

They are an imposing enough soldiery to gaze on, these shrill-voiced Carduchi, of whom Xenophon wrote, 'Their calls ring out among the hills to no avail.' Many wear high felt *chakoes* without a brim, with a turban round it; all are slung with bandoliers, and stuck with knives; but rumour, time-old rumour has it, that they are not quite the fighting stuff they would have you believe. They can fight a winning fight superior in numbers, but when it comes to bayonet and locking ring, they ain't for it.

But whether the Kurds were for it or no, the Burma Rifles certainly were. Silently and unopposed they had climbed the steep hill-face, and stumbled through the prickly scrub of the dwarf oak. Pantaw-gam, carrying his flags, was with the Colonel, and his lamp and his helio were on the back of his assistant. It was still dark when they got to the top, dark and starry and clear, the keen dawn wind just commencing. The Plough lay low in the heavens and Aldebaran twinkled to Betelgeux. Below, the fires burned in the British camp, and behind the walls of rock and the pass the fires of the tribesmen also smouldered.

But the clatter of reveille, not unduly hushed, came up from the plains below.

The Colonel of the Kachins looked at his watch. It was close on four. He would give them fifteen minutes to gain their breath, for they had climbed hard. The havildar-major, a stout old Lissaw from the Bhamo Battalion of Military Police, carried a stout stick and whacked at the head of a lad who talked, and even caught a Burman striking a light, almost breaking the loblolly's wrist in his anger. The terriers grinned. Old Mi-Paw-Gam was right enough. 'Beat them, Tsawbwa-Jee! Beat them!'

The Colonel was going to lead them in rough fours along the top or rather just below the crest, till he found a Kurdish flank, then he would launch them in three columns, one along the crest, one half-way down, one to the valley, and keep a company with himself in reserve. He would lead the party on the ridge for a while and then perhaps drop to the reserve.

Suddenly in the dark, without expecting it, the leading files stumbled on a Kurdish picquet, but before it could stir from torpor the little men had thrown themselves on the tall hill-men, who were disarmed and bound, though one lay with a cleft skull for his pains. One man, however, escaped and fired. A stir rose down the slopes and the Colonel could feel the enemy awakening. The fat was in the fire! He brought up the rear companies and deployed them in line of Company columns, and launched the three, taking the centre himself. The men must push forward as best they could in the rising dimness of dawn. The party on the top soon clashed into more outposts, and figures in the gloom fired into the centre column. It was fairly easy-going on the reverse slopes, for grass grew between the strata and the spaces grew wider. He had fixed bayonets, and hand-to-hand encounters with parties that rose from the ground were beginning.

'Cheer now and yell, my hearties! Let them have it!' And the little men fired and ran and bayoneted and cheered, the Non-coms with slung rifles, *dah* in hand. And then they came to a stone wall, stone and scrub and a sheep thorn hedge, from which a sharp fire broke out. The leading Kachins wilted in the fire. A Burman section lay down to shoot, and the Colonel, who should not have been to the fore, stooped behind a clump of rock to steady the men as they passed, and escape being too early involved. 'Charge the rock if you can! Leap it! They are on the run!' But the temptation to lie down and fire, which the Burmans had

started, was too strong; the company flung itself on to the ground, and started firing too wildly, firing from nerves that were young. 'Cease firing!' shouted the Company Commander. 'Come on! Charge!' And then little Pantaw-gam leapt forward from the C.O.'s side and stood beside the British officer. 'Bravo! Pantaw-gam. Come on, my children.' And the little Lissaw shouted too, 'Come on! Come on! The *Nats* have come!' And rushed forward with the officer, with a dozen men after him. The British officer cleared the *zareeba* with a jump and Pantaw-gam leapt to a big rock, and as he reached it a great Kurd sprang there too, and raised his rifle butt! Pantaw-gam sliced him on the knees with his *dah* and then as he bent, caught him on the head and that was the end of Muhammad Ali Qurbash.

Below in the darkness the Kurds were firing up at him, and he hurled a bomb among them. By now the whole Company are up, and crashing through the thorns or clambering on the rock, and firing into the mass below. The Kurds broke as the Colonel sweeps up with the reserve company, Pantaw-gam hissing his best Chinese swear.

Right and left from the slopes and the valley the cries of the Kachins now rise, the Kurdish flank is rolled up, the frontal attack rolls on, and in less than an hour it is all over.

Sheikh Mahmud has his station behind a great hanging rock that stands alone to the right rear of the pass. Here he falls, for all the Qoran, illuminated and gilded as a beetle's wing, that he wears in a leather pouch. With him die a dozen of his own braves, and the little men swarm round him to find the hostile leader in their hands, badly wounded. In from the entrance to the pass by the main road a British battalion is streaming, and over the other flank a Punjabi corps. You can't see the heels of the Kurds for their dust.

The Pass of Bazian is carried and the British assembling at its mouth find the road clear. The cavalry are launched at a gallop to try and get through to Suleimanieh before the beaten Oriental can wreak his chagrin on his prisoners. Thirty miles and more those cavalry go, *quadrupedante putrem*, and the flying Kurds disappear by any side valley, leaving the road free. Before the news of the defeat has reached the ears of the guard in Suleimanieh the Indian Cavalry clatter through the streets to find seven weary and anxious British faces glued to their prison bars and wondering what was doing.

And that is the story of the suppression of the *coup-d'état* of Sheikh Mahmud, the Kurdish Agha, who thought that he could defy the British, and how a newly-raised battalion of Mongoloids from the world's end played the leading part. Had not the Romans also brought the races of the world to their armies before us, we well might wonder, for the sources of the Irrawaddy are far from the upper waters of the Tigris.

IV.

As General Fraser led his victorious brigades into Suleimanieh the G.O.C.-in-Chief came too, past the remains of the slaughtered convoys that Sheikh Mahmud had scuppered, past the remnants of the Machine Gun Corps and their Ford-vans that he had done in, till he came to the better things of the rescued officers, the resting troops and the confident Burma Rifles. The latter, swaggering through the town with their long *dahs* slung conspicuously about them, were putting the Fear-of-God into rebellious townsmen. It had been a sharp business, rendered imperative and acute by the initial disasters which had overtaken detachments. The heat in the Tigris Valley had been intense and the little campaign brilliantly managed. A cavalry officer was to be rewarded, which is part of another story, and the Colonel of the Kachins had put forward little Pantaw-gam for the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

Because of the wise rule allowing immediate reward, the Chief could take the ribbon of the D.S.O. from his own breast and give it to the cavalry officer, in true Napoleonic gesture, and could reward the little Kachin also. So the force paraded, the recipients fell out, the cavalry officer received his well-earned D.S.O. for a gallant defence, and Pantaw-gam the Indian Medal for Distinguished Conduct. Twenty-seven years before the G.O.C.-in-Chief had gained his own D.S.O. fighting desperately in the first general campaign against the Kachins who robbed the jade convoys far up the Irrawaddy and the mountains of Kumpi Pum, and now far up the waters of the great Tigris was he rewarding the first Kachin to serve as soldier of the British Army, and was probably even more thrilled thereat than the little Lissaw who alternately grinned and quivered before him. For Pantaw-gam was all aquiver. He did not quite understand all that it was about, but his Colonel had just made him a havildar, remarking that a havildarship in the British Army was on the direct road to *bah-dom*, and the little

man's heart swelled as the big English General shook him by the hand and said almost the only Kachin word he remembered, which happily meant well done.

That evening, because British officers are kind and sympathetic and their men are more to them than wife and child, a telegram went forth from the camp in Kurdistan :

To the Assistant Commissioner at Palaw-jyee, Kachin Hills District, Myitkyina.

'Inform Hee-Tee slave to Mai Toi in the village of Scintong that Pantaw-gam has been promoted havildar and has medal for valour, and will soon be *boh*.'

From Commandant Burma Rifles.

And because Pantaw-gam was now a *boh*, Hee-Tee got above herself and declared she was slave no longer, but Ama-Jan of Ind, Lady-at-large, and woebetide those who said her nay !

But as she elected to stay where she was for the *boh*'s homecoming, and as she did as she had done every day these thirty years, no one wanted to argue the point, which as a matter of fact is rather the story of all coal-black mammies, who live the life of the slave.

PAU ENDIMANCHÉ.

THE new trans-Pyrenean railway-line running into Spain via Bedous and Canfranc starts from Pau. By this route, in late September, I was travelling to converge with a friend at Jaca on the Spanish frontier : and thus I came to spend a day and a night at Pau between two seasons. Not many English travellers see Pau as I saw it on that Sunday. Looking out of the carriage window, as the train puffed comfortably at the river level between the hills of the Béarnais I was charmed to observe that Pau's flat, alluvial golf-links was flagless : not a single Colonel, man or ball, was to be seen. That was a good omen, and the omen was fulfilled.

In all Pau that day—and I must have rubbed shoulders with most of its population—I only heard two individuals speak English—and these were American schoolboys wearing the cap of some academy in the neighbourhood. Pau was enjoying a short rest from being a cosmopolitan playground. It was Pau itself, the ancient capital of the Béarnais, that I saw, with its indigenous population cheerfully and dowdily *endimanchés*—a French provincial town and French burghers having roots far down in the Middle Ages, not a sanatorium nor a clubhouse. It would suit my taste never to see it otherwise. The huge hotels upon the Boulevard des Pyrénées were closed or fast asleep ; there were no hotel porters to be seen, no obsequious guides or touts, not a pair of white flannel trousers or a pair of plus fours. The whole town smiled expansively towards the slopes of Jurançon with the air of an unpretentious man who, having normally to dress above his station, has removed his stiff white dickey and put it on the mantelpiece while he takes his ease. The English Club in the square, the hotels round it and the showy Boulevard, stretching along the top of the steep escarpment on which Pau is built, looked a little bit like the discarded dickey. The arrangement of the *café*-tables in the square—close together, each with three or four little upright chairs—the unembarrassed air of the waiters in their white aprons, the want of alacrity on the taxi-rank, and the absence of golf-clubs and tennis rackets, all showed that the people who were going to enjoy Pau that day were those who lived there all the year round. And who have a

better right to enjoy Sunday in their native town than the French *bourgeois*?

Even the modest hotel behind the dickey, where I lodged for the night, was nearly empty. The room, costing eighteen francs, was in keeping with the atmosphere. One had to grope for the keyhole in a pitch-dark dead-end of a passage, and the door opened on a room which, but for the modern basin with taps, could not have changed its aspect for many decades. The bare boards of the floor, the heavy wooden shutters over the window, the massive bed and the cavernous wardrobe of walnut-wood greeted me with a mid-nineteenth-century solidity. Not even the humblest eyrie in Pau's dickey could have that serious, solid air.

The impression of drawing-room shutters closed, of dust-sheets over the furniture and of workmen in the house—their ladders leaning peacefully against the walls during their Sunday absence—was completed by the aspect of the Jardin Publique, where the Casino stands. The big white Casino was being rebuilt: planks and wheelbarrows lay about the usually trim enclosure where, during the season, the basket chairs beneath parasols wait for gouty limbs among tubs of scarlet salvias. Through the empty window-frames one caught glimpses of gutted salons, the main entrance was boarded up, the restaurant and American bar were as tombs, and a tattered programme of the summer's last theatrical performance flapped on a notice-board. Life flowed past the Casino as past a ruin—life that had come abundantly in its Sunday clothes out of the back door—to centre round the bandstand, away by itself under the trees. All permanent Pau was there. Walking, that afternoon, up and down between the main square and the gardens I met or passed all its *pères de famille*, its matrons, its babies and *bonnes*, its young men in *bérets* and its maidens. I heard its Béarnais accent, with snatches of Basque from the humbler lips. It flowed along with a very placid momentum, or sat gravely in chairs listening to the equally placid music. The very band, just so many citizens of Pau in braided coats, conducted by a mild and elderly professor with long grey moustaches, knew what day it was and who were listening, for it played old-fashioned sentimental waltzes, selections from romantic light operas, or little *morceaux* with plenty of flute in them. At three o'clock it played in the gardens, and at six o'clock the same programme under the plane trees in the square, opposite the wide, open bastion from which Pau enjoys its enchanting panorama of green hills and purple peaks piling up towards the

south. No syncopated rhythm spoiled that Sunday placidity or caused visceral disturbances under those comfortable waistcoats. It was sheer *province*—a piece of that vast and variegated, but yet so homogeneous, French provincial life which once more, after the phase of elegant classicism, is absorbing the gaze of the younger French novelists. In this very garden, possibly, this very band might have been exasperating the melancholy of some repressed damsel who, like a recent heroine of M. Julian Green's, was hopelessly in love with the young doctor next door and would subsequently push her angry father down the stairs, to break his neck, before she herself, in the gloomy style of to-day, went mad.

Such melancholy possibilities were, however, no more obvious on this day than they ever are in daily life. And Pau had another attraction besides the band. The first sign of this had been the sound of a Basque pipe and tabor issuing joyously from a motor-car which carried six men clothed in fancy dresses of scarlet and gold down the zigzag road leading to the station. Then the population slowly gathered round the parapet of the bastion whence, without paying a penny, they had a very fair view of the pelota-court below. Here the champions of Pau, their curved wicker *chisteras* on their hands, were already practising against the *fronton*, or wall of the court. The pipe and tabor and folk-dancers—for such were the gaily dressed men in the motor—were accompaniments of their challengers, a team from a Basque town. A good three-quarters of an hour later than the specified time the fascinating game, a glorified fives played three a side in which the ball is caught in the wicker *chistera* and returned against the wall in a single powerful and harmonious motion, began, lasting over an hour. It was regarded with gravity and little open emotion. Very few paid five francs for the privilege of watching it from the covered stand on the court, but very many saw it for nothing as they stood in the sun upon the bastion. The Basque team won; and, when the game was over, the Basque dancers marched on to the pelota-court, the bells jingling on the dress of the jester with his hobby horse, and danced two dances to perfection. The tall poplars partially hid them from the spectators on the bastion, and it was only then that I regretted not having gone down to pay my five francs. Yet the tune of the pipe, gay but plaintive, rose easily upwards in the thin air; and one could imagine that, having heard that pipe and those tunes from babyhood, one could never again be happy far away from their sound. The morris-dance was agile but not violent, a thing of

steps and *battements* rather than of jumps and 'heys,' and the rhythm was magnificent.

The rich colour of a September sunset came over the hills and gilded the bastion while the pipe was still tweedling its traditional air; and the dancers, with a seriousness which belied the fantastic gaiety of their dress, moved to and fro or up and down, their feet twinkling in rhythmic unity. A smell of earth and river-mist came up from below, the plane trees rustled gently behind our backs, and the artificial bastion on which we stood crumbled for a timeless moment into the original cliff, incorporating us, stripped of chance accessories, in the ancient, resistant body of Béarn. The brief diversion of men and women, between one work-day and the next, when the elements are kind, has altered little since men began. The configuration of those hills, the meanderings of that shallow river, those scarlet dresses, those twinkling feet and that haunting pipe gave it particularity here. Pau could never have been more Pau than at that moment, when all that makes it Pau for foreign tourists had vanished into baseless fabric.

The favours of fortune might have ended there: had there been nothing for it but to return, after a glass of Vermouth under the plane trees among those modest but ardently loquacious *con-sommateurs*, to dine in the bare dining-room of my little hotel and retire early to my *sommier*, I should have been grateful enough. But fortune, I have noted, is singularly kind to the greedy: when she sees that somebody wants a thing badly enough not to rely upon her for getting it, she usually throws in an unsolicited extra. That day might have declined in banality, and Pau, by night, have relapsed for me into being any strange town, whether I had dined in my hotel or eaten in solitary state a meal cooked by the scullion in any palace-hotel which might have been open. Greed and enterprise saved the evening: fortune brought it to a triumphant conclusion.

My particular greed, if such it must be called, was bibulous, not gluttonous. Pau is the home of that rare wine, Jurançon, whose scanty vineyards crown one of the green slopes across the river.

'The wine of Jurançon has an entirely individual flavour, which, like most subtle natural flavours, it is almost impossible to describe. It is rich in aroma, of great breed and delicacy, firm, liquorous and mellow. Its outstanding characteristic is its *douceur*, which does not mean exactly sweetness, though it has plenty of

liqueur and, in certain years, is undeniably excessively syrupy. It is a very long-lived wine, which only exhales its subtlest fragrances after several decades, having capital roundness of body and plenty of marrow and vinosity.'

These lyrical words, which contain nearly all the compliments which a vinologist can pay to a wine, come from that invaluable book *A Book of French Wines*, by Mr. P. Morton Shand. He also tells the reader that Jurançon was the favourite wine of Henry of Navarre and, according to Hoffmann, is a perfect accompaniment to religious music. Having, as usual, consulted Mr. Morton Shand's book before starting across France, lest I should miss any vinous curiosities through ignorance on the way, I had no intention of leaving Pau without tasting a bottle of old Jurançon. Besides, it was obviously a correct wine for Sunday. But where to find it? The finer wines given in the brief wine-list of my own hotel were not local, and I had no faith that a palace-hotel, whatever label was displayed on the bottle, would give me the genuine article. The thing was to discover a good *restaurant du pays*. Prudently, therefore, I had bought a copy of the local guide-book in the morning, while the newspaper shops were still open; and, though I only extracted one line of information to the purpose from all its topographical eloquence, this line proved well worth the six francs that it cost. Pau, it seemed, was ill provided with casual restaurants outside those of the large hotels: the Béarnais, I take it, are frugal, and eat at home a *cuisine* less opulent than that of neighbouring Provence. Yet there was mentioned one *café*, the Café P——, upon which, without any textual justification, the local guide bestowed an asterisk. Here then, if anywhere, a right Jurançon would be found.

Reading the plan of the town by the light of the street lamps, I tracked the Café P—— through streets now silent and deserted. I found it occupying a sharp corner in the broad square where the market was mournfully sleeping. The Café P—— was indistinguishable from any other small French *café* throughout the length and breadth of France. Its awning was furled, its exterior iron tables were piled upon the pavement, and within, upon the ground level, two or three belated drinkers of Quinquina or Byrrh, a languid waiter, the usual rows of bottles and the zinc bar gave no promise of food, on a preliminary survey through chinks in the curtains. Nobody was coming out, or going in, or emptying his glass: indeed, I should have feared to intrude upon that interior where time, apparently, stood still, had I not observed, on closer scrutiny, a

pedestal within bearing the legend 'Restaurant au Ier.' I looked upwards. Heavily curtained windows, showing not a gleam of light, met my eye. Did they not dine on Sunday there? Was it the cook's day out? These questions, I felt, were un-French; and, though no bill of fare hung outside to tempt the passer-by, I summoned resolution, pushed open the glass door, and disturbed the timelessness—but very little—by crossing the floor and walking up a narrow back staircase, as the legend directed me, to the first-floor dining-room. And there, I am not ashamed to say, I spent an hour and a half delightfully, absorbed for the second time that day into the unaffected, original motion of *province*, so seldom open to the casual foreign traveller.

Like the bedroom where I was to sleep, that little dining-room, of which one end was shaped by the sharp angle of the street corner, could not have changed for many a decade. Its walls were discoloured white, the door and other woodwork were of pine covered with a common grained varnish, and upon the plain mantelpiece, in front of a tarnished gilt-framed mirror, a head and shoulders of some departed *patron* issued complacently from marble foam. A longish *table d'hôte* occupied all the body of the room, while at the sides and in the window embrasure were five or six smaller tables laid with simple, heavy cutlery, and thick tumblers by way of wineglasses. A stout and jovial head waiter in a plain lounge suit was assisted by one of two lads clothed in black with the traditional apron: and from time to time the proprietor who, with his two daughters, dined at the head of the *table d'hôte*, went himself to the service table to inspect and distribute a dish that had been sent up in the lift. There was no evening dress, no *luxe*, no *décor*, no glitter of glass and silver, but only the bare appliances which serious people in France require for consuming solid good food and wine. This contempt for unnecessary ceremony was, perhaps, unduly emphasised by one of the diners at the *table d'hôte*, who finished his soup by taking the plate in both hands and unassumingly pouring its contents into his mouth. The proprietor's daughter who sat opposite to him did not blench.

At one of the smaller tables opposite mine a gimlet-eyed married woman dined alone: a veritable Megaera. As she sat down, she viciously wiped every knife, fork and spoon, and polished her glass with her table-napkin with the air of one condemned to dine in the ward of a fever-hospital. You could see by her face that she was the type of avaricious, jealous, scandal-mongering woman who

poisons the life of neighbours in a small town—Madame Chose, a combination of all the less pleasing qualities of the French *bourgeoise*, respected and feared by all, especially by her children and her daughter-in-law. At a table beyond hers sat two women of the same class but of more amiable aspect, one old and wispy in rusty black, the other florid and just on forty. Between them they drank one and a half bottles of red wine during the meal, and their mutual confidences grew more and more voluble as the wine warmed their hearts.

The meal was appropriate to the setting—plain, satisfying and, of its kind, first class. We had clear soup, grilled grey mullet, thick slices of roast sirloin, *cêpes* very highly flavoured, and a thin custard—the very meal for a generous wine. I called the waiter in the lounge suit and put my need for an old Jurançon before him. He responded with enthusiasm, and produced a bottle of 1916 vintage, which was not very old as Jurançon goes, but satisfactory. It was a lovely orange colour, not unlike Lacrima Christi to look at, and its flavour of lusciousness mixed with a most curious flinty earthiness fully justified the lyrical expressions of Mr. Morton Shand, with which I will not attempt to compete. No wines tell of their vineyards as do the heavier white wines of southern France, and a glass of Jurançon speaks with a full voice. I did not try to cope with the whole bottle, for I found the taste in the end a little cloying; so, after enjoying its perfect harmony with the rich *cêpes*, I poured out a glass, and then another, for the lounge-suited one, who thereupon entertained me, in his strong Béarnais accent, with a discourse upon the growth, vintage and magical properties of the noble juice.

After settling this Falstaffian meal with a *petit verre* of good Armagnac, and paying a very moderate bill, I walked out once more into the silent streets. Silent they were and deserted when I first turned towards my hotel: but here Fortune, unsought, turned up coquettishly. Once more she took me into the inner heart of Pau. My direction led me across a small *carrefour* where several streets meet, and through which runs a double tramway track. At eight o'clock it had been as still as a churchyard: now, two hours later, it was packed with people, all dancing in semi-darkness. At one end of the open space a temporary stand, rather like a jury-box, had been erected on the pavement, and inside this a band of wind instruments was playing dance-music, by the light of a flare. When the band played the crowd all began to jig all over the cobblestones and tramlines. Girls who had no cavalier danced

with one another. There was hardly light enough to see their faces, but those close to me, as I stood by the sweet-vendor's stall at the corner, belonged to the workers of Pau. These were the *calicots*, the shopgirls, the clerks and apprentices and serving-maids of the town disporting themselves. A sedate *café* occupied one side of the *carrefour*, with balconies at its upper windows. Suddenly this *café* threw aside sedateness: enthusiastic members of the proprietor's family popped out on to the balconies and began bombarding the windows and roofs of the houses opposite with fiery balls from Roman candles. Over the façade of the *café* Bengal fires were lit, giving all the background a queer appearance of stage scenery. The crowd saluted these pyrotechnic effusions with ecstasy, egging on the firework-exploders to fresh prodigies, and these, excited to a high frenzy by the applause, dashed yet more wildly in at one window and out at another, fervently struck matches and threw the balls of coloured fire higher than ever. When the Roman candles were exhausted and the Bengal lights had burned low, while heavy fumes of brimstone floated round our heads, the band struck up again. Every man among us seized his partner, and again threaded a jerky fox-trot in and out of the throng of jogging shadows, while cries of excitement and enthusiasm went up from the more congested regions. It was as though the spirit of the finished Basque morris-dancers had penetrated to the heart of humbler Pau, finding an echo there and prompting all the young to rhythmic if untutored motions of the limbs. The air was mild, and an amiable moon gazed upon the antics of this happy town. A more perfect Sunday, I think, was never spent by Pau.

ORLO WILLIAMS.

THE ATLAS.

THE English mail which meets the homeward-bound bureaucrat of the East at Port Said is the sweetest of all mails. I could have embraced the fallow Levantine agent who brought me mine. He cannoned into me in the ship's smoking-room door on that stagnant August morning, and I held him in an Ancient Mariner's grip until he had spread my own letters, first of all, on the card-table. Their very envelopes smelt of home, reviving, with a rush, old memories of cricket on real turf, of monster trout in the cool glassy rivers of the South, of heather and grass-bound cliffs and long perfumed twilights crowning the eighteen-hour days. Incredible as it seemed, these things were now less than a week's journey away, and my wife's letter, well I knew, would tell me all about the little house in Devon with which she had fallen in love at first sight, and decreed that there, and nowhere else in the world, was my six-months' leave to run its course. Devon! The name itself was worth all the poetry ever written; all the joys of the seven Paradises were wrapped in that little word of five letters. So, cramming into a pocket all the covers but one, I made my way forward to the most shady and secluded spot on the upper deck and settled down to degust my packet of delights in solitude. The deck was utterly deserted. Below me, the gangways were out and the usual file of imbeciles tottered down them into the rocking boats, to waste their money ashore on synthetic amber pendants, peridot-and-topaz necklaces, scarabs on which even an amateur Egyptologist would look askance and strangely, and, far worse than all beside, coffee innocent of the bean, and the garbage, miscalled lunch, that the cafés spread for the provender of the infatuated shopper in that African port. Had I pledged myself to escort the American damsel ashore? The probabilities were that I had. Through the hubbub of the boat-deck her remarkable voice, calling on me by name, mounted to my shelter. Poppa, she lamented *orbi et urbi*, had resolutely refused to face the perils of the gangway. He had, she guessed, gotten too fleshy to voyage, and for all the use he was to his offspring might as well have stayed in Pottsville, Ohio. The voice, suddenly, met its match in a beneficent blast from the syren of the ship lying next to ours. When the blast ceased, the girl,

I observed with relief, was already sandwiched into a motor-launch and half-way across to the wharf of landing. And so my wife's letter was read in perfect peace. Everything, not only in the garden but in the house and country-side was lovely beyond anticipation. The two boys were home for the holidays, and, P.S. a pomegranate was in flower on the south wall, though the landlord's agent would not certify that it had ever come to fruit. It was a long letter and very, very good to read.

Shadowy islands were rising out of a level, pearl-hued floor when, four days later, two of my fellow-voyagers and myself sat in our dressing-gowns drinking coffee on the main hatch. The sun was not yet above the horizon, and there had been a tang, a first hint of a European temperature, when we took our morning plunge into the swimming-bath. Our boat steamed quietly, as if not yet awake, past two misty humps of land, and the name of the one hump, according to the deck-steward, was Ithaca, of the other Zante. Why had I never before gone home by way of the Adriatic? This must be 'wooded Zakynthus,' by all the Gods! It was, in fact, covered with a sort of scrub, whereas Ithaca might have been any island south of Marseilles and north of the green tropics. But when I drew Gurney's attention to it, he declared, with disgusting certainty, that it was not Zakynthus at all. No one, it seemed, had yet identified that legendary island. And he resumed his discussion with Crauford, which was on the subject of leeches.

When Gurney and Crauford yarned together it had been my habit on that voyage, to listen in silence. One cannot expect to have the luck, twice in a lifetime, to share a cabin with two men each of whom, independently, has to his credit at least one geographical discovery which has changed the maps of Central Asia. The gardens of England, moreover, owe to one of them a whole series of Siberian *Ranunculus*, while both, I learned, were carrying home in their cabin-trunks enough unnamed butterflies to keep the experts at South Kensington busy for months. These things, like the poet's rainbow and cuckoo's song, might never—in fact, to a certainty would never—come my way again, and, to hear the two men compare experiences was, to a humdrum official like myself, a chance not to be forgone. If I could choose my next incarnation I would be an officer in the Indian Army, unmarried, with a taste for exploration, a hobby and sufficient private means to allow me

to take every day of leave, with or without pay, that the regulations permitted. I would, in short, be a Gurney or a Crauford, that is, unless and until I happened to meet—

Leeches had begun well, but to my disappointment petered out in a complete agreement on the way to tackle the brutes; creosote and plugging the lace-holes in one's boots was part of the recipe, as far as I recollect. Then the talk swung to Lepidoptera, but the jargon of that subject, being unintelligible to the profane, left me cold. The first bell for breakfast had sounded when Gurney let fall a name with which I was, in some way, familiar, though, at the moment, I could not trace its association.

'Ever run across Davenant?' he asked of Crauford. 'He specialised, I believe, in your lines. I ask because, for the past few years, he has rented a little house of mine in Devon.'

The other nodded. 'Knew him well. I was with him when she died.'

Crooking the little finger of an uplifted hand, Gurney turned to him a face all question.

'Not now. Curious how some of the worst cases manage to pull up in time. I remember going down one of those Chindwin gorges—it wasn't charted then—a fourteen-mile-an-hour current, in pelting rain. One of my two men lost his paddle at the precise moment when the roar of the Tsan-lo cataract first struck our ears. I had stripped mother-naked, with some insane idea of taking the drop feet-first; fat lot of good that would have been, but—well, I'm alive. An eddy saved us. Davenant, I take it, struck an eddy. If, that is, his heart was ever in the drinking business, which I doubt. He gave it a good trial, and I happen to know it was not the only thing he tried. But, as far as my experience goes, when collecting gets a grip of a man, no other vice has a chance. Hang it, man! Neither of us is even married!'

A shrug, and, after a pause—

'Not always. What about those two Chicago murderers, Jew-boy millionaires? One of them was the first authority on Brazilian Himantopods. I've seen his monograph. A fine piece of work.'

The exception, laughed Crauford, was a scandal or an enigma. It proved nothing.

The slow-match of my memory flared.

'Please may I speak?' I said, taking my wife's letter from my pocket. 'I am interested in this Davenant. My wife has taken

a house in Devon, near Hailes, for the summer. It is on the edge of a steep combe, what you leech-sucked Philistines would call a Khud, on the opposite side of which lives, she writes, a recluse called Davenant, and he collects butterflies. Cabinets, in fact, are about the only furniture in his house. What I want to learn from you is whether the man is safe. According to my wife, my two small boys are in and out of his house all day, and the postman——'

'Gad, that's old Copley!' (This from Gurney.)

'The postman,' I continued, 'is for ever dropping mysterious hints about him. He has been extraordinarily good to the boys, but if your Copley is to be believed, he needs looking after, in fact, he has not one but several tiles loose. No grown-up person, for example, is allowed to pass his threshold.'

Crauford knocked out his pipe and hesitated.

'If,' he replied, 'you are prepared to give breakfast a miss, and can hold out till the eleven-o'clock soup, I will tell you all that it is necessary for you to know about Davenant, and leave you to form your own conclusions. But it will take some time.'

And as a meal more or less on a seventeen-day voyage is neither here nor there, Gurney and I settled down to hear Crauford's story.

'I met Davenant for the first time,' he began, 'in a Darjheeling hotel ten years ago, when I was lying up for the hot weather between two collecting trips into the Mishmi country. He was certainly what men of our time of life would call a gentleman. The younger generation, you must have observed, are losing their hold on the meaning of that term. In addition, he was a collector, as keen and competent a Lepidopterist as any man alive. Now, though that end of the Himalayas held no surprises for me in the moth-and-butterfly line, I was glad to go out with him almost daily, and head him off from running after rubbish. Naturally we became fairly intimate, and in a month or two he had amassed a really creditable collection. But his chief object in coming to Darjheeling, as I soon learned, was to obtain specimens of the Atlas moth, which, as everybody knows, is the largest fly extant, often measuring close on eleven inches from one wing-tip to the other, and singularly beautiful in colouring. One of the Silk family. Round Darjheeling they are common as sparrows, and any tourist can buy their cocoons, for four annas apiece, in the local bazaar, and hatch them out for himself. I told him as much. Nothing doing!

He had no use for bought specimens ; he must catch the moth for himself, " and here," he declared, " I stay till I catch one." This, I explained, would involve his staying on through the Rains, as the early brood of Atlas seldom emerges before September, and in a lingering monsoon may be a month late. He did not care. Apparently, neither time nor money was of any consequence to him. Poor fellow !

In May there turned up at the hotel one of those ill-balanced couples which the rail and steamer publicity offices nowadays send out to India by the gross. They weren't so common then. The Plains, Kashmir, Simla, and home before the monsoon breaks is their usual programme, but these intended to prolong their tour into a second cold weather. My recollection of Mrs. Gwinn is by now hazy. She kept her room for much of the time, played Bridge incessantly, and complained of the height of Darjheeling affecting her heart. But the girl was altogether out of the ordinary, and when I found her and Davenant one morning busy over a setting-board, while she explained to him her own, private method of "relaxing" the driest and most brittle of his catches, I began to take a definite interest in her. Not that even then I could have told you the colour of her eyes or hair—one can't observe everything—but, before long, I found myself thinking, when I met her, of a new *Arissoema* I came on once, in Central China, and lost the seeds on my way down to the coast. I've had my men on its track for years since, but in vain. Half the girls in the world, you will say, are flower-like, in some individual's eyes, at some time or other in their lives, but you will please remember that I was not in love with her. If either of you have ever happened, say, on a lily as high as your shoulder, at the edge of the 14,000 snow-line, or the white-and-blue spray of an unknown orchis in the reeking gloom of an Aracan forest—I've done both ; these are the things I care for—you will have some idea of the *unexpectedness* of her style of beauty. And yet, among the crowd at the hotel, partly because she was shy and neither danced nor played cards for points, she moved comparatively unnoticed. Actually, whenever she entered that depressing building, she seemed to dim her lights ; as if, on the instant, a lamp behind her face and eyes had been turned low. Out of doors, in the silence and shade of those marvellous ravines, she was another creature, alive to the tips of her fingers. But only Davenant and I saw that transformation. Other companions in her daily excursions she had none.

There is a Vanessa common in those hills which, in flight, is beautiful beyond description, but when it settles to rest, you might take it for a dead leaf, until you examined it closely. Then you would notice that every point and line and splash of colour on the upper surface of its wings has its counterpart, faint and ghostly but exquisitely distinct, on the under-side. When Davenant took to calling the girl by that fly's name, it was not hard to guess how matters stood between them, and after that, on some excuse or other, I left them to ramble about the jungle alone.

Their engagement was accepted by the aunt with a readiness inspired, perhaps, by the prospect it held out for her of an early release from the miseries of travel in India, a country which, as she now confessed, she detested with all her heart. She had found a congenial Bridge set and, after all, there was nothing whatever to urge against the match. Judged by all the accepted standards, indeed, it was ideal.

I have already mentioned Davenant's object in visiting Darjheeling. It was only to be expected, then, that the girl should become as infatuatedly determined to secure an Atlas as her lover himself. Now, the earliest emergence of the moth occurs in the lower, warmer valleys, particularly in the neighbourhood of a group of semi-derelict tea-gardens called Hurda, close to the fiftieth milestone on the road down to the plains. Of this unfortunate fact the curio-dealers of the bazaar had already informed Davenant, before I was able to suggest an alternative, and no amount of argument on my part could dissuade either him or Miss Gwinn from their plan of spending some days at the rest-house, as soon as the hatch was to be expected. I say 'unfortunate,' because, if you look at the Malaria Survey map of the Province, which hangs, according to regulation, in the hotel's office, you will see that the Hurda neighbourhood is coloured in the deepest black, as a hyper-endemic area. Visitors are warned by printed notice that even in the driest weather they should retreat within the gauze-protected doors of the bungalow before dusk, and sleep under nets. From June to November it is madness to halt there at all, except for an hour or two in the heat of the day. "A place where your tea tastes like your bath-water smells," was the most quotable verdict on Hurda I could elicit from the local officials, with a sinister codicil that the doctor always arrived there too late. In such a spot, by the tragic selfishness of those lovers, two others besides themselves, for Mrs. Gwinn could not be left out of the party and I had resolved to make

the best of a bad business, were committed to spend at least one day perhaps two, possibly a whole week.

I often think that one aspect of India is not sufficiently remembered. It is that practically every one of us serving in the country is a picked life, passed as sound before he sails as a youngster, by a board of doctors who repeat their test at intervals and 'spin' him at the slightest sign of organic flaw. There are no old people of our race in India, and very few sick. The former vanish under the '55 Rule,' the latter are either pushed out of sight on leave, or, dying, are replaced and forgotten before the next Rains. And all of us are broken, young, to the tyranny of boiled water and quinine. But who warns the ignorant globe-trotter against the death that lurks in the fetid dust of the show-cities of the plains, or in the chill of the jungle, after the sun has set? If I am to blame for letting that expedition go forward, and nothing less than a warrant of arrest would have held Davenant from his purpose, I share the blame with others.

You are to imagine, then, the four of us settled, not uncomfortably, for all the clammy heat which foretold the breaking-up of the monsoon in a final cloud-burst, in the three-room rest-house, at the fiftieth mile. On our third day out, there was still no sign of Atlas, but Miss Gwinn had found a cocoon of the species only a few yards from the verandah, and what with this, and the capture of a decidedly rare variety of Kallima, she and Davenant were in the highest spirits. At dinner that evening the storm came on us. A gauze door, carelessly left unbolted by the servants, was driven open by the violence of the wind, and it was a full minute before we could close it again, during which interval the lightning and the appalling cannonade of the thunder had thrown the girl's aunt into a fainting-fit. After that, it rained for twenty-six hours on end, thirty inches in a single fall, as I learned later, and when the weather cleared, and the unsheltered car was in a fit condition to take Mrs. Gwinn back to the hotel, we found the road hopelessly blocked by a landslip. Climbing it, I pushed on alone, making for a post-office further up the road, only to meet with a worse block within three miles of the first. And I was the only one of us who could handle a car!

Back in our tracks we turned, intending to strike the railway forty miles down the road. There is an elbow-turn below the rest-house, and there, the magnificently engineered road simply ceased to exist. It had melted into a naked, scarred precipice; a

yellow streak of mud far down the ravine, bristling with poles and tangled wire, was all that was left of it. We were trapped!

Though it nettled me at the time, it was perhaps, natural that Davenant and the Gwinns refused to admit the danger of our position, regarded the whole affair, in fact, as rather amusing. The road, they argued, would certainly be cleared before long. We were well provisioned and, what with Bridge and the books we had brought with us, the next few days, on which heavy rain fell between intervals of stewing heat, were not intolerable. The aunt, too, was making a rapid recovery and ended by declaring the lower altitude was better for her heart than the Darjheeling hotel. But on the very evening of our return from our search for a way out, a little incident attracted my attention which cost me a sleepless night and led to a serious inroad on our stock of quinine. Miss Gwinn was drawing a card for the cut. She hesitated before turning its face, and in that moment, three grey specks fell, lighter than snowflakes, on the back of her hand. Magpie Anopheles, you realise. Their venomous needles were at work—I had no time to warn her—and then, too late, she brushed them into nothingness. That open door on the night of the storm had let in the death which dances in the sodden shade of the jungle, and, five days later, the girl's temperature was soaring.

You have probably come across cases of malignant cerebral malaria; I spare you, therefore, the agony of the succeeding forty-eight hours. She regained consciousness a little before the end, and prayed for light, for air, with a pathetic insistence which the distracted Davenant was utterly unable to withstand. He flung open the folding doors on the western side of the room; I think he told himself, then, that the crisis was past and she might still be spared to him. Outside, mile upon mile of slanting forest lay bathed in a turquoise and amber afterglow. There was no wind, but a great chord of solemn sound, the drone of the myriad-voiced, pulsating insect-life of a tropic jungle, beat in on us like the noise of surf on a coral reef. Immediately, the room was filled with flying things. Enormous Mantises, rose-coloured with rustling wings of apple-green, enamelled beetles sharded in bronze and emerald, troops of the lovely sharp-winged Sphynx moths whose whirring *corps de ballet* poises over our Indian garden-beds at sunset, in and out of the open door they swirled and drifted, mocking with their triumphant vitality the dying mortal whose race was already run. She lay with half-closed eyes, so still, in the gathering dusk, that,

at length, her aunt, who had been holding her hand, rose quietly to shut the folding doors. But between bed and doorway, she stood and looked back. She told me, afterwards, that she was sure her niece had called her, but this was a delusion. And yet, I too, and, I think, Davenant, were sure that, from the fading spark of life that remained to her, had issued to all three of us a protest and a command. So we waited, and one of the servants came in softly and put Mrs. Gwinn's travelling-lamp on the table.

We talk, glibly enough, of the tragic irony of fate, an expression, when you pull it to pieces, either blasphemous or without meaning. Coincidence, again, is an over-worked word I always hesitate to use. I put it to you. The servant had brought the lamp, not on a casual impulse, but according to order and routine. A beam of strong light in the darkness of a Bhutan jungle at the end of the monsoon—is it coincidence that draws to it every moth within its range? And if we sit down to wait for something which we know is bound to appear in time, do we call it chance when, at last, it takes shape before our eyes? Nevertheless, when the first of the great Atlases came in upon us from the forest, up the path of light and in through the open door, on that strange, faltering wing-beat of theirs so utterly unlike the flight of bird or bat or other creature of the air, I own that my self-command was shaken. In a slow, straggling procession they entered the room, and the cone of light—the lamp was a powerful one with a reflector—revealed them like a fluttering ribbon reaching far into the outer darkness of the forest. The *frou-frou* of their velvet fans was in our ears, as they blundered round the cornices and ceiling: our cheeks were cool with the little wind they made when they passed near our faces. And one of them, a dark splendour with gleams of violet, hovered over the face of the girl. It alighted on her lips, and still Davenant made no movement. It raised and lowered its wings, once, twice, and was gone.

Next day a runner brought the news that a car was waiting for us on the far side of the nearest landslip, but that return journey is a memory I do not care to dwell upon. The old lady and myself escaped infection; Davenant's life was in the balance for many days. In his prolonged delirium—you can guess its tragically recurring theme—the only voice he seemed to recognise was mine, and as nurses were short that year, a full share of his tending fell to me. Nor was I surprised at the doctors warning me, when he was fit to be moved, that his sanity was in greater danger than his

physical frame. On that subject, as it happened, I was better posted than they. Before his trouble, the doctrine of transmigration of souls had always attracted him greatly, as I had gathered on many of our joint excursions; and in his convalescence he returned to the idea with a persistence easily recognisable as morbid. And though the name of the dead girl, or of the great moth for which her life had been thrown away, never passed his lips after the fever left him, the trend of his thoughts, to me at least, was very obvious. A wretched accident put the matter beyond doubt. You know the Lepchas who hang round the hotel selling jungle curios, arrows, coloured seeds and what not, to tourists in the season. One of these aboriginals came suddenly on us in the verandah with a live Atlas pinned to a slip of bamboo, and, at the sight of it Davenant fainted clean off. That threw him back for a week into a nervous crisis. Thank God! he believed my assurance, which he made me repeat on oath, that I had ransomed and released the moth, otherwise, I am convinced, he would be in an asylum to-day. And now, to revert to your question whether your neighbour is a fit companion for your boys, you must decide yourself.'

I thanked him and, for the rest of the voyage, we talked of other things.

Every small boy worth his salt has a hobby, and for the past year or two, my second son's affliction had been an unquenchable lust for setting-boards, killing-bottles, and all matters connected therewith. This, I congratulated myself on a warm afternoon in town about a week after I had landed, reduced the choice of birthday presents to an almost mechanical simplicity. I had merely to step into a shop off Trafalgar Square, consult a memorandum-book, buy a couple of volumes, and the thing was done; and there my generosity would have halted, but for a card which caught my eye a little later, in the window of a taxidermist's shop. It is a famous shop, familiar to big-game hunters all the world over; but besides its main business, which is the mounting of every trophy under the sun, from a mouse-deer's head to the whole of a rhinoceros, it has side-lines. On the window-card was printed, in capitals, 'Atlas cocoons,' and below it hung an object rather like a bantam's egg which has seen better days. An inspiration moved me to round off the present of the two books by throwing in half a dozen or so of these (presumably) desirable little oval caskets. I had learned something about Atlas moths on the voyage home, including the

fact that any tourist can buy them in the Darjeeling bazaar for four annas apiece. On this point, however, the young man in the shop was prompt to correct my scale of values. Half a sovereign each and only five in stock, was his reply to my light-hearted enquiry.

Would they hatch out in England? Well, that depended. In Regent's Park, under properly regulated conditions of warmth and moisture, considerable success had been obtained; and as concerned the price, the trouble was the Red Sea. To send the cocoons home into the rigours of an English Spring was fatal. After that month the losses by premature emergence on the voyage were enormous, for even if the moth came out uncrippled, it was a battered wreck by the time the ship reached Plymouth.

I reflected. The little house in Hailes was a veritable sun-trap and when I felt a craving for five minutes of a Malay jungle in June, I had only to enter the greenhouse and shut the door. There was just a chance—beside the excitement of the gamble. In the end I bought one cocoon and took it down west next day.

Though our houses were separated by less than a furlong as the crow flies, and stood in full view of each other, across the ravine-like combe, I had never made Davenant's acquaintance. My enquiries convinced me that he was not an uncommon type of recluse, who shunned all contact with adult human-kind, but found consolation in the society of the very young. Certainly, without his patient companionship, my lads would have missed many day-long expeditions in the glorious weather of an unusually fine summer, from which they garnered much happiness and zest for life. Familiar as I was with one section of his life's story, and my wife, of course, was not left in ignorance of it, we never intruded on his loneliness. It was a relief to know that the tragic incident of the rest-house had in no wise affected his ardour for collecting. There was, in fact, no reason why it should, except in regard to a single species of Asiatic moth, which he was as likely to encounter in Devonshire as to meet a python between his front-door and the post-office. I remembered Crauford's remark that his hobby had been his salvation. In due time, the birthday present was received with rapture and the cocoon came to port in the greenhouse. There it reposed, egg-like, in a suitably upright position, on the lid of an old cigar-box, through which a hole had been scooped with a brace-and-bit, to receive what we conceived to be the cocoon's lower end. For a week after its arrival the two boys took turns to watch

it, in the sanguine expectation that the insect might emerge at any minute, but after a period of protracted disappointment their visits of inspection fell off in frequency, and towards the end of August the elder boy confided to his mother his belief that the cocoon was a dud. His pessimism was shared by myself. The young man in the shop had been emphatic in refusing to give any sort of guarantee that the egg was not addled. Apart from this contingency, our conservatory, hot as it was, could not really have been an adequate substitute for the reeking warmth of an eastern Himalayan jungle in the Rains.

For all that, the heat of that August seemed to me a very passable imitation of the climate of Lower Burma at its worst. The thermometer, of course, mocked my complaints. This is a habit of home thermometers. But the fact remains that my silk suits, well saved for the return voyage and smelling to heaven of naphthaline, were unearthed by me for daily wear, to the scandal and astonishment of the entire neighbourhood. It was, in parenthesis, humiliating to find that the greatest grumbler at the temperature was myself. We took to dining on the verandah, and the boys slept in the summer-house.

That the rain, when it came, would be torrential, was obvious to the most incompetent weather-prophet, and that the summer-house was likely to be more a danger than a protection in a storm, the boys themselves reluctantly admitted. On an afternoon, therefore, of concentrated sultriness, they carried their beds, by order, indoors : masses of copper-coloured nimbus heaped half-way round the horizon having convinced even them that the drought was on the point of breaking up. That night they pleaded hard for a postponement of the bed-time hour ; the stuffiness of their attic, they declared, made it impossible even to think of sleep. So it happened that, between ten and eleven o'clock, after dinner, the four of us were sitting in the verandah, watching the flickering of the summer lightning, and waiting for the air to cool.

Across the combe, through the open door of his study, the figure of Davenant in his shirt-sleeves was plainly visible, as he pored over a flat white-wood box on the table before him. His bearded profile was thrust forward, his hands rose and fell in a series of small, precise movements interpreted by my boys as the unpinning, and, after examination, the replacing of his beloved butterflies. Now and then he touched a specimen with a fine brush before putting it back in the box, and for this delicate operation he was using a

powerful lamp, with a reflector. That lamp annoyed but fascinated me. There was no escape from it, unless we turned our backs to the night and our faces to the hot wall of the house; and, under its hypnotic influence, our desultory talk lost itself in long intervals of silence.

I must have fallen asleep, though all the time I was quite sure that Davenant's lamp across the combe still occupied my attention. But the cone of light was shining down a long slope of tropical forest, and was full of dark shapes, neither bird nor bat, ascending in marshalled procession, on feeble, wavering wing-beats, to the focus of the cone. Davenant's table had turned into a bed, on the pillow of which was a face in shadow. Over it, in the full glare of the lamp, hung another face, which wore no beard, but I knew it to be Davenant's, and as I watched, one of the flying things invaded the little cell of light and hovered between the two faces. . . .

A crashing salvo of thunder woke me. It seemed that my entire family were haranguing me at the top of their voices. A cigar-box was pushed into my lap by a boy whose hands shook with excitement. 'Hatched! Come out!' he shouted. 'Look!'

So I looked, and the cocoon was a gaping shell. Its late inhabitant was clinging to a stalk of geranium annexed for the time being, with her accustomed foresight, by my wife. The limp, madid body of the moth was as big as a mouse, and the still-undeveloped wings, gleaming with the dew of that marvellous birth, hung from the creature's shoulders like heavy, velvet curtains shot with opal. Their edges and extremities were curved and crumpled, but before our eyes, the panting body hardened and contracted, the wings, raised and lowered in rhythmic jerks, shook out their folds and creases until soon their abrupt movements were succeeded by a vibration, scarcely perceptible, of the extended, perfect fans. And as in spell-bound silence we watched that amazing transformation, and my wife was in the act of handing the geranium-stalk to an impatient boy, she uttered a cry. Without warning, swiftly and softly as a brown owl floats from its stance on bough or roof-ridge, the great Atlas vanished into the night.

Like a pair of well-trained setters on the leash, when a hare bolts from under their noses, were those two lads. My grip was on their shirt-collars, but it was my 'Steady, Steady!' that held them back from a headlong plunge into the black pit of the combe. Their young bodies quivered and their slippered feet beat upon the verandah flags in the agony of their loss. My wife assures me

that they were weeping too copiously for their tear-drenched eyes to follow my own straining gaze, but, be that as it may, unlike them, I, for one, knew what to look for, and where. Invisible for a full minute, it stole into view on the path prepared for it, a throbbing, a dark twinkling in the heart of the cone of light thrown by Davenant's lamp. It took the shape of a living thing in flight, it had reached the terrace and now it had entered his room. Behind the fitful flappings of its wings, the lamp flared and darkened as if blown upon by strong gusts of wind. I saw the seated figure of Davenant stiffen and half-rise from the chair, as he flung out his arms in a rapture of longing, of consummation, of release. Then, like a wall of water, the rain came roaring down between us, and I saw no more.

An aneurism, explained our local doctor, on the day after the funeral.

I am, I suppose, as clearly responsible for the death of my neighbour as if I had shot him, by accident, from behind. The reflection has never caused me a moment's remorse or distress. For, surely, the privilege of such a passing, swift, painless and blissful, is a gift as far beyond measure as beyond the scope or guarantee of mortal love. Even in the old fables I have never read of its inclusion among the boons which any favourite of the gods has dared to ask of them, or they to promise. But, I who owed Davenant nothing, had given it to him by the merest chance. Crauford himself, I imagine, would admit as much. He and Gurney wrote to me, about the time the collections were auctioned, asking for particulars and regretting their inability to be present, but the young man from the taxidermist's shop was there, with, I am told, half the Lepidopterists of Europe. They flocked to our little village, as he expressed it, like moths to a candle.

C. G. CHENEVIX TRENCH.

SHOPMATES O' MINE.

BY W. F. WATSON.

Nor many mornings ago I was seated in a tramcar when a garrulous woman sat down beside me and immediately opened up a conversation on the weather. It was rather a one-sided affair, I'm afraid, for she did all the talking. Usually reticent with talkative strangers, I was particularly so on the morning in question. In addition to the fact that it was Monday morning and I was on my way to work, the weather was cold and miserable, and the time was half-past six. I was feeling just about as cheerful as the weather. But when a loquacious lady has made up her mind to talk in a public vehicle there is no stopping her, and there being no escape until one or the other of us reached our destination, I resigned myself to my fate and listened.

Having gained my emphatic and unqualified admission that the state of the weather was really vile, my garrulous fellow-traveller embarked upon a graphic recital of her troubles, and within a very short time I learned, among other things, that she had a son who was unemployed, and another lying in hospital whom she visited every Sunday afternoon. 'Do you know,' she said confidentially as she prepared to alight at the next stop, 'I get properly fed up with the week-ends. There's all the cleaning to do . . . and the washing . . . the shopping and the cooking . . . and then there's the visit to the hospital on Sunday afternoon. . . . I tell you, I'm jolly glad when Monday morning comes so that I can get back to work.'

I was dumbstruck! It seemed amazing that anyone, much less a woman with a family, could be cheerful when going to work on a draughty tramcar at half-past six on a miserable winter's morning; and that anyone should welcome Monday morning and the workshop appeared really tragic. For days I pondered over that woman's remark, searching for a possible explanation. Closely observing my shopmates, I noticed that beneath the outward and visible manifestation of dislike of the workshop so characteristic of most workmen, there lurks a subconscious satisfaction, and the lively manner in which they discussed with each other the week-end happenings—football matches, the races, cinema, theatre,

political meetings, no matter what—led me to conclude that, at heart, they were really glad to be in the shop.

Why should this be so? Maybe in some instances it is due to unhappy home conditions, but it surely cannot be so in every case. Love of the work may sometimes be the reason, but again not always. It seems to me that the principal reason underlying the desire to get back to the shop will be found in the fact that man is a gregarious animal. Most people spend the greater part of their waking hours in the workshop or office, and they form friendships among those with whom they work. Even when discipline prevails, there are ample opportunities for exchanging views and discussing common interests, consequently the office or shop becomes more interesting and attractive—sometimes more desirable even—than the home surroundings. And so, when retiring to rest on Sunday after a more or less enjoyable week-end, there is a sub-conscious feeling of contentment that, on the morrow, we shall again be among our fellow-workers.

That Fellowship is Life and lack of Fellowship is Death is nowhere more demonstrably true than in the workshop. If one's shopmates are surly and fail to respond to lively intercourse, the whole atmosphere of the shop will be depressing and unhealthy; but if the majority of the men are of a cheerful disposition, the dirtiest and most uncomfortable shacks will quickly assume an air approaching serenity. In one shop I worked in there was a tall, well-built lad of twenty, full of the exuberance of youth, whom we called Horace. Although his voice was far too strident to be regarded as musical, he would make the whole place reverberate with the latest love lullabies or ragtime tunes, oftentimes starting as soon as he entered the shop and continuing the whole day long. On those rare occasions when Horace was silent and nothing could be heard but the monotonous hum of the machinery, and Hickson, who was extremely reticent and inclined to be morose, would be looking as glum as a funeral mute, I just walked over to Horace to inquire if everything was all right.

'Oh, yes, Bill,' he invariably replied with a laugh. 'Everything is O.K. But why do you ask?'

'I was just wondering, Horace, that's all. The shop seems rather quiet . . . !'

Within five minutes he would burst forth into song, others would join in, Hickson's face would gradually relax into smiles, and cheeriness would reign supreme.

Generally speaking, British workmen are cheerful bodies. Badinage and leg-pulling goes on to an alarming extent in most shops, and woe betide the man who is so sensitive that he cannot appreciate a joke against himself—such a man will have a devil of a life. There was a cross-word enthusiast in another shop I worked in, and the news went round that he was competing for one of those delightful bungalows which were pictured in the press so extensively a few years ago. With some clay garnered from the yard, the shop wag fashioned a very creditable little bungalow, which was ceremoniously presented to the cross-word fiend. He was simply furious, and had he then known who made the thing, I feel sure there would have been a fight. He soon got over it, however.

Badinage is not confined to youths. Middle-aged men often behave like irresponsible schoolboys when in the workshop, never missing an opportunity of 'taking the mike' out of a shopmate, or of perpetrating stupid practical jokes on one another, all of which is usually taken in good part. It is quite a common thing to see a couple of fully grown men calling each other the most vile names, and threatening one another with immediate death—all in fun.

Obscenity and profanity prevail in all workshops. For the most part the men talk indescribable filth in horrible language, often relating with ghoulish glee, intimate domestic happenings, and they really cannot understand anyone who does not respond to their lascivious recitals. What is most deplorable is that some men are so lacking in self-respect that they fill the minds of innocent lads just from school with obscenities, fathers with lads of their own. But it seems to me that they are to be pitied rather than blamed. Possessing a strictly limited vocabulary, the average workman is at a loss for expletives that are not foul, and never having considered sexual things except in terms of obscenity, they know no better. It is satisfying to note that there is a slight diminution of this sort of thing, but it is really enigmatical when otherwise intellectual men indulge in smut. I recently worked with a man, married and with a family, who distorted every commonplace remark, gesture or action into an obscene joke, and he could not utter a single sentence without foul expletives. Yet that man can discuss with profound learning and knowledge the life and habits of any and every fish. He was a worshipping disciple of old Izaak Walton, and he possessed many medals and prizes, won by his prowess with rod and net.

One meets many outstanding personalities during thirty years

of workshop life, shopmates who are ever remembered because of certain characteristics. There was Tim Kinder, for instance, with whom I worked when a callow youth. Tim only had one meal a day. Every morning he brought to work a huge bundle of bread and butter which he planted on a convenient shelf near to his machine. As soon as he started work, he opened his parcel and began to eat, and to my youthful mind, he did not stop chewing until it was time to knock off work. I often wondered whether Tim Kinder ever had a meal at home!

There are two reasons why I remember old George Todd—a very clever old-time turner. He could make a serviceable tool from an old rusty nail, so to speak, and he always made his own cigarettes from flaked tobacco—shapeless things they were too, and the paper would keep coming unstuck, which made George swear. One day the manager was showing a number of well-dressed gentlemen round the shop, and I noticed that old Todd was laughing as though someone had just told him a funny story. He was thoroughly enjoying himself.

'What's the matter, George?' I asked, 'Where's the joke?'

'Ha! Ha!!' he replied, the tears running down his cheeks. 'See those guys old Mellish is showing round?'

'Well?' I queried, 'What about it? I can't see anything to laugh at.'

'Can't you!' said George, wiping his eyes. 'Why, they're some of the blighters we have to keep!'

Bill McGregor was one of the old-time fitters who served his apprenticeship well over fifty years ago. When I worked with him he could still do a good job with the next, despite the fact that he was approaching sixty and had lost an eye. Old Bill, I and a few others used to play cards in the canteen during the meal hour and in the evenings whilst waiting for the train, and, being the youngest and most nimble, I raced like the devil to the canteen and ordered tea and cake for all in order to save time. My wage then was thirty shillings a week. One unforgettable pay day, when I reached the canteen all hot and bothered, I discovered that the sovereign and half sovereign (there were no Treasury notes in those days) had slipped through a hole in my pocket. I was frantic! To lose one's wages was a tragedy. Hundreds of men and boys were traversing the same path as I had followed, and I had visions of the coins being picked up by a dishonest person. Rushing out of the canteen, I retraced my steps towards the shop

anxiously scanning the roadway. I'm afraid the tears were dangerously near my eyes. Looking up, I saw old Bill McGreggor ambling along and, when a few yards from me, he stooped, picked something up and put it in his pocket. On I hurried, not dreaming that a one-eyed old man would find the lost coins. I had passed him by a yard or so when he turned round and called after me.

'Hi! Bill, what's the matter? Have you lost anything?'

'Lost anything!' said I brokenly, 'I've lost all my wages, Bill—a quid and a half a quid!'

'Have you?' he laughed. 'Well, here you are, my lad. Be more careful another time. I spotted 'em as I was coming along!'

There are clean mechanics and dirty mechanics. The former will manage to keep the face clean however dirty the shop and job, but the latter contrive to blacken the face no matter how clean the factory or work. I am rather proud of the fact that I rarely get a dirty face at work, but Alf Stocks, a particularly intimate shopmate of mine, was a perfect scream. Within half an hour of starting his face would be as black as a nigger's—he simply could not keep himself clean. He was a fairly good mechanic, knew little or nothing about economics, history or literature, but he was passionately fond of music. On numerous occasions he brought his beloved fiddle to my house, and entertained us by interpreting the masters with remarkable skill and technique. They were indeed enjoyable Sunday evenings. The first time I paid him a visit I was struck by the number of beautifully coloured paintings hanging on the walls of his sitting-room. To my untrained eye they were original works of the immortal Turner.

'My word, Alf!' I exclaimed admiringly, 'where did you buy all these lovely Turners?'

'They're not Turners,' he replied, blushing with pleasure. 'I painted those, Bill. Not so bad, are they?'

Not so bad! I thought they were wonderfully executed. Here was an ordinary turner who made himself frightfully dirty in the shop, and yet could play the violin with skill and technique, and paint creditable copies of the works of one of the most difficult artists. That was it—Alf Stocks was a copyist; but who can tell to what heights he might have risen had he been born in circumstances which would have afforded him proper training; or if he had possessed sufficient originality to emulate the great Turner himself?

Freddie Bright was another musical shopmate of mine. He

was a fine 'cellist, and I loved to hear him play Van Beine's 'Broken Melody,' and Sullivan's 'Lost Chord.' Freddie was a very clean mechanic and exceptionally clever with his tools, but Alf Stocks was more of an artist, and altogether a more likeable man.

Many years ago, a blacksmith told me a story, which I have never been able to verify, about the feast that was held to celebrate the building of Solomon's Temple. With graphic detail embellished with lurid adjectives, he related how the alleged feast was restricted to those who had actively participated in the building of the Temple, and that when everyone was seated, there came a loud knocking at the door.

'Who are you?' asked the doorkeeper.

'I am Old Clem,' was the reply, 'and I demand a seat at the table.'

'Old Clem!' echoed the outraged doorkeeper. 'Who are you, that you claim admittance at the feast of Solomon's Temple?'

'I am Old Clem,' proudly replied the claimant for admission. 'It was I who built Solomon's Temple!'

'You!' scoffed the doorkeeper.

'Yes, I,' blazed Old Clem. 'With my anvil and hammer I made the trowels for the bricklayer, the chisels for the mason, the saws for the carpenter. I forged the tools that were used by the men who built Solomon's Temple. Without those tools no Temple would have been built. Therefore I claim admittance to the feast.'

And amid the blowing of trumpets, Old Clem was led to the honoured seat at the feast of Solomon's Temple.

Whether or no it was that story which attracted me towards blacksmiths, I cannot say, but it is the fact that I have always been partial to 'iron fighters'; indeed, I have often regretted that I did not follow the forge instead of the lathe.

Sam Hill, the man who related the legendary tale, was not one of the best of workmen. He scamped his work and left far too much metal on his forgings, which made additional work for the machinists. I remember that I had to turn some steering arms which he had forged, and they were frightful. Three-quarters of an inch was the finished diameter, and old Sam had left them one and a half inches when seven-eighths would have been ample. Armed with a pair of calipers and a rule, I took one of the steering arms to him and in an acidulent tone, addressed him as follows:

'I say, Sam, old man, aren't you working rather close on this

job? This one is only an inch and a half in diameter, and you know they have to clean up at three-quarters. You ought to leave them at least two inches.'

Although I side-stepped mightily quick, I do not know to this day how Sam's hammer missed my head. There was murder in his heart. He worked a bit better afterwards, but it was a long time before I was again on speaking terms with Sam Hill.

Tom Tidey was perhaps the most elusive personality of all my shopmates. He stood over six feet in his socks, was gaunt and bony in appearance, and he combined great strength with remarkable humility. I never heard him swear, and seldom did he raise his voice above conversational level. He was a good blacksmith, very untidy in his dress, and oh, how the man could drink! Blacksmiths have always held a reputation for heavy drinking, but Tom Tidey was a real 'soaker.' We usually spent the dinner-hour in the public bar of the Castle Inn, I eating my sandwiches with a pint of ale, Tom habitually quaffing four quarts a day, but never a bite would he eat, and he invariably took a quart back for his tea. Many times did I suggest that it would be better for him if he had a good meal; but without avail. 'It's all right, Bill,' he would say, 'I don't want anything to eat, the beer's enough for me.' I cannot remember seeing him eat during the two years I worked with him.

One day I noticed Tom leaning against his forge crying like a big baby, the tears coursing down his cheeks unchecked.

'What ever's the matter, Tom?' I asked, quite concerned.

'I don't know, Bill. Nothing seems to be going right to-day. Three times I've tried to "shut"' (the colloquialism for weld) 'these shackles together, and I can't get the right heat. I don't know what's the matter with me!'

'Well, don't upset yourself like that, Tom. Ask Harry Shambrook' (who worked on the next anvil) 'to give you a hand.'

'Do you think he would, Bill?' replied Tom, hopefully. 'I don't like to ask him.'

'Of course he will. Don't be silly, Tom.'

As I anticipated, Harry only needed asking, and he quickly helped Tom out of his difficulty. Tom wiped his eyes, leaving white streaks down his grimy face, and smiled for joy.

Only once did I see Tom the worse for liquor, and beyond a doubt he was drunk—laughing drunk. He had to hang on to his anvil to steady his quaking limbs.

'Now, do I look drunk, Bill?' he asked me with a foolish leer, 'I don't think I'm drunk . . . do you think I am, Bill?'

I assured him that he wasn't very drunk, anyway, and he struggled through the day. Fortunately it was an easy-going shop.

I have often thought there was a tragedy behind Tom Tidey's life. Over his four quarts of ale in the Castle, and sometimes in the shop, he would quote Shakespeare by the page, and he could discuss philosophy and literature quite learnedly. Obviously he was very well educated, and his knowledge of the arts and the sciences was both extensive and profound. But he was very secretive about himself, and all I was ever able to glean was that he sprang from a good family, and that his old mother was well-to-do. Tom was a remarkable character and, despite his drinking propensities and unkempt forbidding appearance, a very lovable man.

I shall always have cause to remember Harry Shambrook, whom I have already mentioned, and who was a far more skilful blacksmith than Tom Tidey. When a job left Harry's anvil it was a picture: he was an artist with a hammer. And he worked with the sang-froid of a man who knew he was master of his tools. On my way home one foggy night, I found old Harry leaning against the wall of a tavern—right next door to the local police station—hopelessly drunk, with a mob of youngsters round him. Here was a dilemma! To desert him in his hour of need was out of the question, and to get him home unaided presented a problem that needed some solving. Taking hold of his arm, I shook him and invited him to come along with me. As soon as his back parted company with the friendly wall, over he went with me on top of him, and it was impossible for me to lift him to his feet again—he was too far gone. But he had to be carried home somehow, and the approach of a representative of law and order quickened my wits. After satisfying the constable that the helpless bundle of humanity on the pavement was really a very decent chap who had inadvertently overstepped the mark, and a shopmate of mine, and that I would see him home all right, I selected the most intelligent and honest looking of the youngsters, gave him sixpence, and despatched him for a barrow. There were no cabs available. When the barrow arrived, I invoked the aid of a passer-by, and between us, not without infinite effort, we humped old Harry on to the barrow. Followed by the cheering kiddies, I triumphantly trundled my unconscious comrade across the common, and when I delivered the body to his anxious sister,

with whom Harry lived, he being a single man, the good lady overwhelmed me with thanks for bringing home her brother. But what a job we had to get him in the house! He *was* a weight!

Harry was at work as usual next morning, apparently none the worse for his adventure, but of course he had no recollection of how he got home, and was highly amused—and grateful—when I told him all about it.

Should anyone relate a particularly tall story we generally say impatiently, 'Oh! Go and tell that to the marines'; or we sarcastically ask the raconteur if he is an old soldier or sailor. That soldiers, sailors and marines often let the imagination run wild to the detriment of truth cannot be disputed, but that they should be singled out as masters of the art of 'telling the tale' has ever been a source of wonder to me. People in civil life are no less gifted in this respect. We are a race of braggarts, and when relating our latest exploit to more or less willing listeners, we oft-times allow the ego that is in us to magnify the most trivial incident that might reflect glory on our prowess into very important happenings. This rather common aptitude to draw upon the imagination is usually harmless and, maybe, permissible, but sometimes one meets a man with a mind so obsessed with an exalted opinion of his abilities, so fond of talking about what he has done and what he can do, that his stories necessarily assume an air of unreality. George Richards, a typical Yorkshireman frightfully careless with his aspirates, with whom I worked some years ago, was such a one.

One day a speck of emery dust found its way into George's eye, and he asked me to remove it, I having acquired a reputation for skill in such cases.

'Ere, Bill,' said he, 'I don't know what the 'ell's the matter with my heye. I wish you'd 'ave a look.'

How George loved to talk about the big firms he had worked for and the big jobs he had handled! Seated round the bench during meal hours, he would regale us with incredible yarns about the huge plants he had installed in remote parts of the country.

'Ah!' he would say reminiscently, 'that was a big job if you like. I was working for Black's of Sheffield . . . putting down a big engine in a big brewery at Watersville. Why, the steady-pin weighed over a ton!'

Although we pulled his leg unmercifully, it had no effect whatever on his imagination.

'By the way, George, how old are you?' I asked him one day. 'Forty-nine,' he replied. 'Why do you ask?'

'Well,' said I, 'I think you've made a mistake. During the past fortnight I've been making notes of the different firms you say you have been working for, and the length of service with each.' And I read the list to him. 'If all this is true, George, you must be seventy-nine years old, not forty-nine.'

To give him due credit, George laughed as heartily as the rest of us, but then it's not easy to disturb the self-satisfied equanimity of a man with such a vivid imagination as George Richards possessed. Apart from this weakness, he was a real good chap. Himself a capable mechanic, he was always willing to help any shopmate who was less skilled. Not so Frank Woodley, also a competent workman who worked on the next vice, and who possessed all the craft prejudices in abundance. So jealous was he of his skill that if he thought anyone was watching him at work he would drop his tools and walk away. I remember Woodley so well because he seemed incapable of correctly pronouncing the word 'amalgamation.' Despite repeated attempts to correct him, he would persist in saying 'amalagation.' Frank Woodley was inclined to be surly and irritable.

Teddie Portland was a Novocastrian, a good turner with an overweening partiality for a glass of ale, and a fund of dry humour. We worked together in a small shop in the city, and five of us were wont to tour the taverns during the meal hour, quaffing glasses of ale and sampling 'snacks at the bar.' Teddie had a distinctive name for each house we visited. The 'Cannon' became the 'Dagger Arms' because a barmaid resented Teddie's subtle wit by glaring at him. The 'Sugar Loaf' was the 'Hoare's House,' after the brewers of that name; the 'Cooper's Arms' he designated 'The Half Full House' by reason of the fact that the barmaid failed to fill the glasses right up to the brim; and when one of us received a shilling short in the change at the 'Skinner's Arms,' he promptly called it the 'Skin 'em Arms.' On our way back to the shop, Teddie always slipped in the 'King's Head' for an extra pint, and a drop in a bottle for the afternoon! Those were hectic meal hours.

One day Teddie accidentally smashed a set of *en bloc* cylinders.

'Here, Tom,' he called out to the charge hand, laughing with glee, 'come and see what I've done.'

Tom was very much alarmed when he saw the condition of the cylinders.

'Good gracious, Ted,' he exclaimed, 'how the devil did you do that?'

'I just tapped it with the hammer and it fell in,' explained Teddie, still grinning.

'Well, it's nothing to blooming well laugh at,' said Tom indignantly.

'Ain't it?' responded the irrepressible Teddie. 'Well, I was laughing to think how wild I'd be if the cylinders belonged to me!' No! He was not discharged; employers were more tolerant in those days.

The first time I met Peter Saltaire, another never-to-be-forgotten shopmate, was when I was working for a firm of brewery engineers in the East End of London. He was a small, well-made man of French parentage, with all the excitability of the Latin temperament. Peter had already frittered away one fortune, and was then following up clues, searching wills and consulting solicitors, in respect to a fortune in Chancery which he claimed to be entitled to. Men unable to establish their claim to a fortune which they are convinced they are entitled to are usually morbid moaners about their misfortunes, but Peter Saltaire was one of the merriest of shopmates, singing, whistling and cracking jokes the whole day long—he was a true philosopher.

'It doesn't matter a bit, Bill,' he replied when I urged him to get a move on with the investigations. 'If I get the sanguinary money I shall only spend it. I'm happy enough in the workshop as long as I can get enough grub for the missus and youngsters—and a half a pint for myself!'

I lost sight of Peter for some years, and then met him again in a big railway shop, I being in the tool room and he in the erecting sheds. At that time, self-opening doors were in the experimental stage, the difficulty being to make the delicate little valves controlling the compressed air, air-tight. Now valve-grinding twenty years ago was an art only to be acquired by years of practice, and everybody in the tool-room, including myself, the foreman and manager, tried to 'grind them in' as it is termed, without success. When I knew Peter was at hand, I remembered that he had served his apprenticeship in one of the oldest valve-and cock-making shops in the country.

'Bring him in here,' said the foreman, when I told him about Peter. 'If he can get these damn fiddling things right, I'll keep him in the tool-room.'

Peter was not merely an expert at valve-grinding, he was uncannily clever. The first valve he tackled was one I had been vainly trying to get right for a whole day. In less than an hour he had it perfect. On another occasion, Jack Priest, another shopmate, was cursing and swearing because he could not get a trip-cock to hold the air. The trip cock controls the emergency brakes on the Tube trains, and they *must* be right.

'What's the matter, Jack?' inquired Peter.

'I can't get this blank, blank cock to hold up, and I've been trying for a day and a half!'

'Let's have a go at it,' said Peter.

In a quarter of an hour that trip-cock passed the test!

I can visualise little Peter at his vice now, wagging his head to the oscillating motion of grinding, sometimes singing, sometimes whistling, or passing the most inane remarks, but all the while, without any apparent trouble, making those valves air-tight. Many times I asked him to tell me how he managed it.

'Dunno, Bill,' he replied nonchalantly. 'It's all a wangle, you know.'

Like myself, Peter never stayed very long in a shop, and after about a year at valve-grinding he went to work at Southampton, where he cultivated a potato patch with considerable success. Many years have passed since I saw him, and I often wonder whether he eventually succeeded in landing that elusive fortune. Whatever has happened to him, I dare swear he is as merry as ever.

These are but a few of the many hundreds of shopmates I have met in my travels from shop to shop. Of course, I met some miserable sneaks, surly unsociable brutes who adopted questionable methods in the vain hope of enhancing their economic position; such men are not worth wasting time over. In the main, one's fellow-workers are a merry, 'come day, Sunday, God send pay day,' crowd. It is true that they hourly murder the English language and frequently use the most horrible expletives; true also that many drink heavily and are often blind to their own personal interests, but it should be always remembered that the uncultured men—and women—in the workshops, no less than the captains of industry, scientists and inventive geniuses, have, by their skill and devotion to their work, made this country of ours what it is to-day, and I for one am truly proud and grateful for having been privileged to work with them.

LITERARY ACROSTICS.

A LITERARY ACROSTIC is published every month, and the Editor of THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE offers two prizes to the most successful solvers. The winners will be entitled to choose books to the value of £1 from Mr. Murray's catalogue. If several solvers send solutions of equal merit, the two whose answers are opened first will win the prizes.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 75.

'The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves to and to me.'

1. 'There first came one daughter,
And then came another
To second and ——
The request of their brother.'
2. 'He could shoot an arrow from him,
And run forward with such fleetness
That the arrow fell behind him!'
3. 'Where more is meant than meets the ——.'
4. 'It's Oh! to be a slave
Along with the barbarous Turk,
Where woman has never a soul to save,
If this is Christian ——!'
5. 'The deck it was their field of fame,
And —— was their grave.'
6. 'The sunflower turns on her god, when he sets,
The same look which she turn'd when he ——.'
7. 'You, whose gentle hearts do fear
The smallest monstrous mouse.'
8. 'Ships, towers, ——, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky.'

RULES.

1. Only one answer may be sent to each light.
2. Every correct light and upright will score one point.
3. With his answer every solver must send the coupon that is printed on page x of 'Book Notes' in the preliminary pages of this issue; and he must be careful to give also his real name and address.
4. Solvers must on no account write either the quotations or the references on the same paper as their answers. It is not necessary, or even desirable, to send them at all.
5. Solvers who write a second letter, to correct a previous answer, must send the complete solution as they wish it, and not merely state the desired alteration.
6. Answers to Acrostic No. 75 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE, 50A Albemarle Street, London, W.1, and must arrive not later than November 20. No answers will be opened before this date.

ANSWER TO No. 74.

1. G	iganti	C
2. L	e	A
3. A	rro	W
4. M	au	D
5. I	ag	O
6. S	adde	R

PROEM: Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, i, 3.

LIGHTS:

1. Longfellow, *Seaweed*.
2. Gray, *Elegy*.
3. Longfellow, *The Arrow and the Song*.
4. Tennyson, *Maud*, part one, ii.
5. Shakespeare, *Othello*, i, 1.
6. Coleridge, *The Ancient Mariner*, part 7.

Acrostic No. 73 ('Fifty Three'): The prize-winners are Miss Poynter, 15 Park Terrace, Oxford, and Miss Todhunter, Riverdene, Bourne End, Bucks; these two solvers will choose books to the value of £1 from Mr. Murray's catalogue.

